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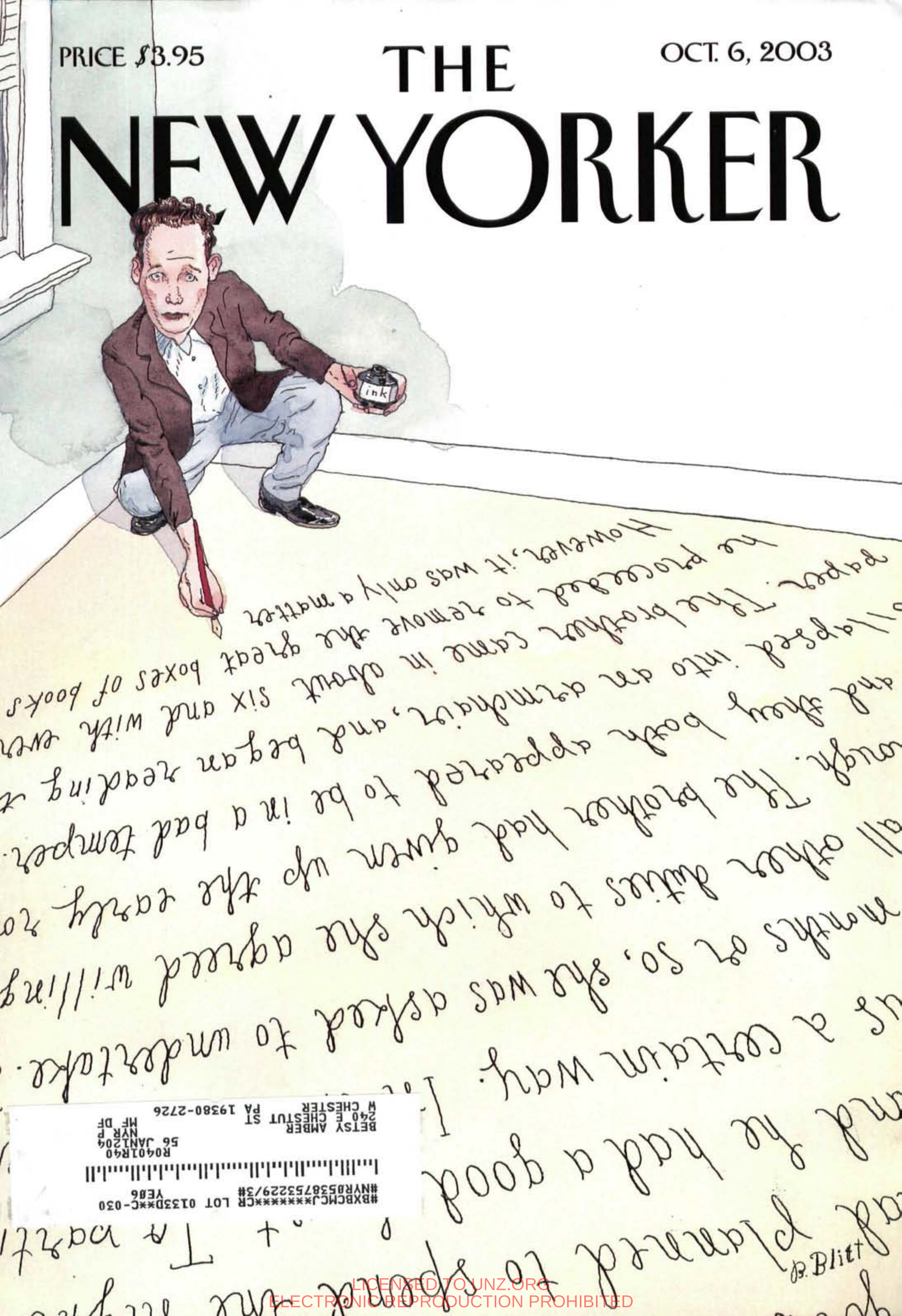
OCT. 6, 2003


ink
However, it was only a matter
he proceeded to remove the great boxes of books
paper. The brother came in about six and with eve
collapsed into an armchair, and began reading
and they both appeared to be in a bad temper.
rough. The brother had given up the early
all other duties to which she agreed willing
months or so, she was asked to undertake
a certain way. I
and he had a good
planned to spend the
B. Blitt

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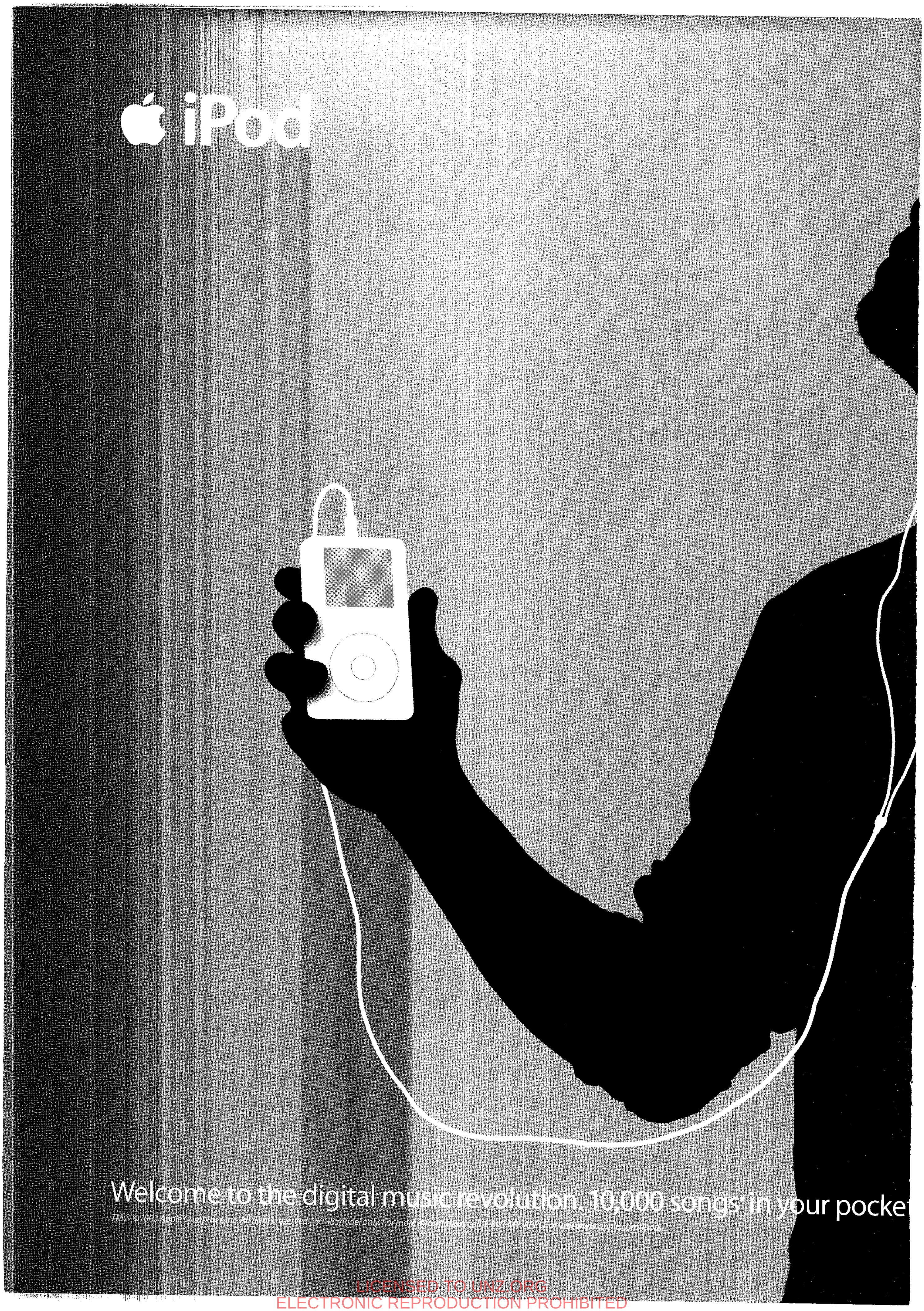
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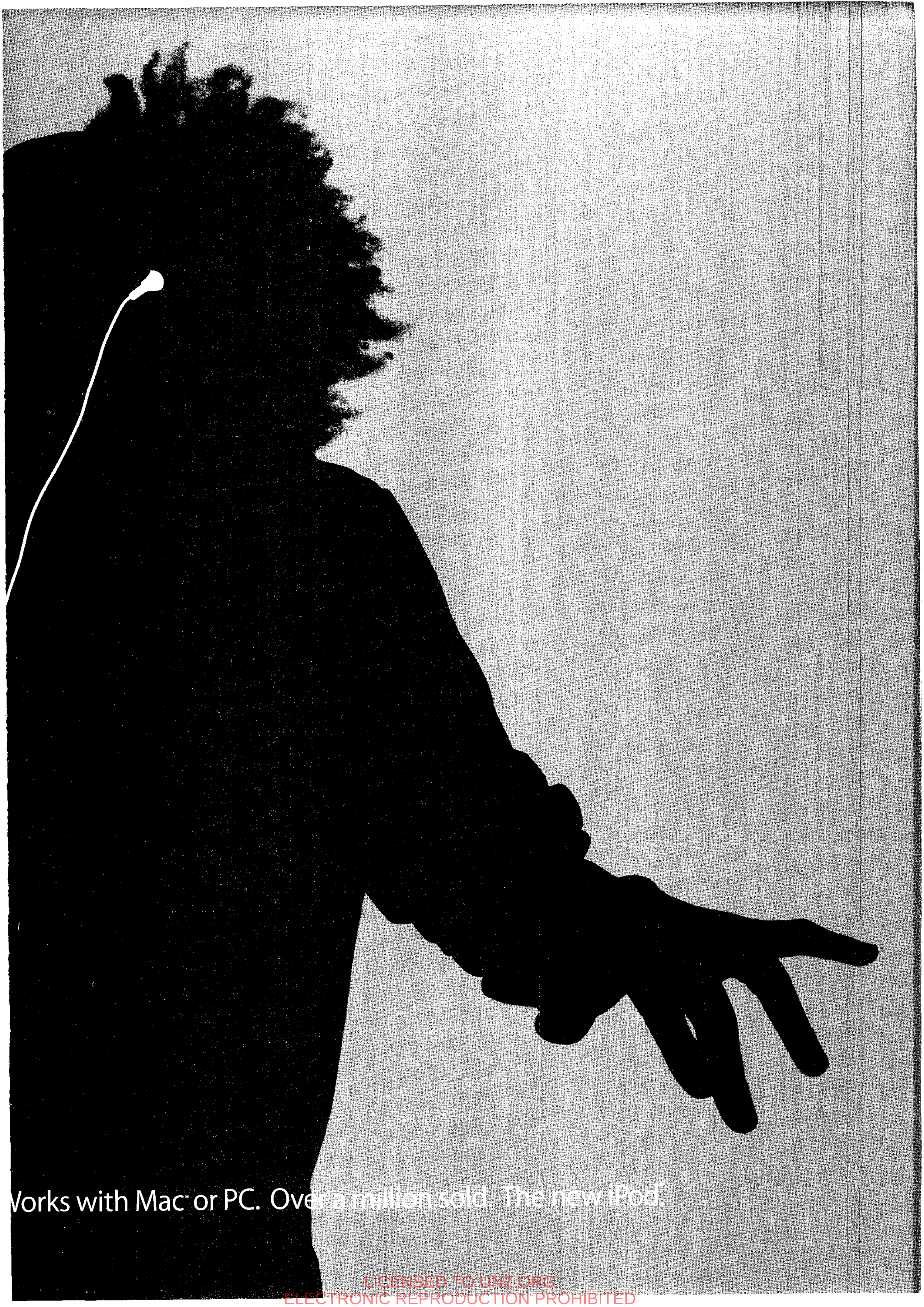
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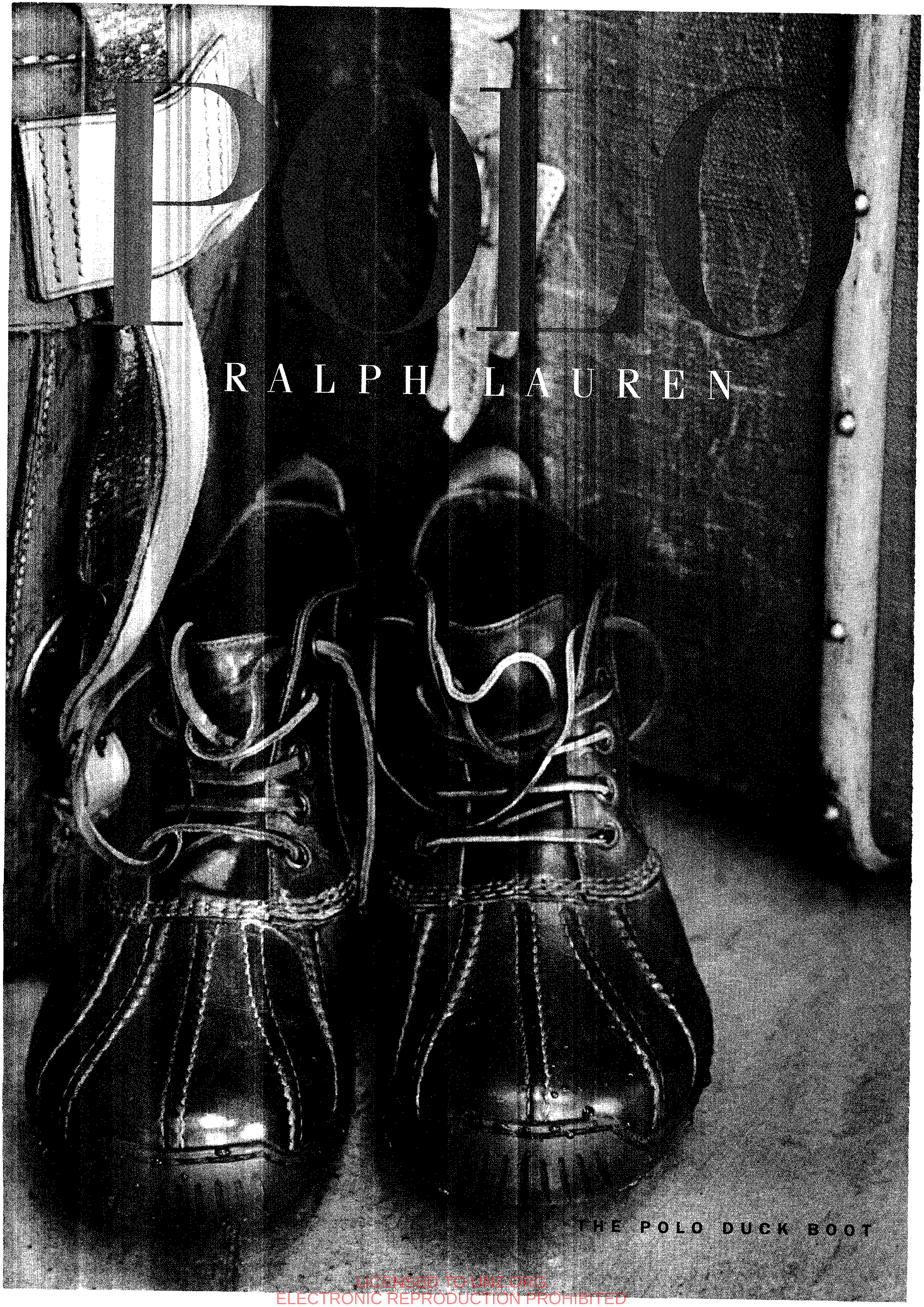
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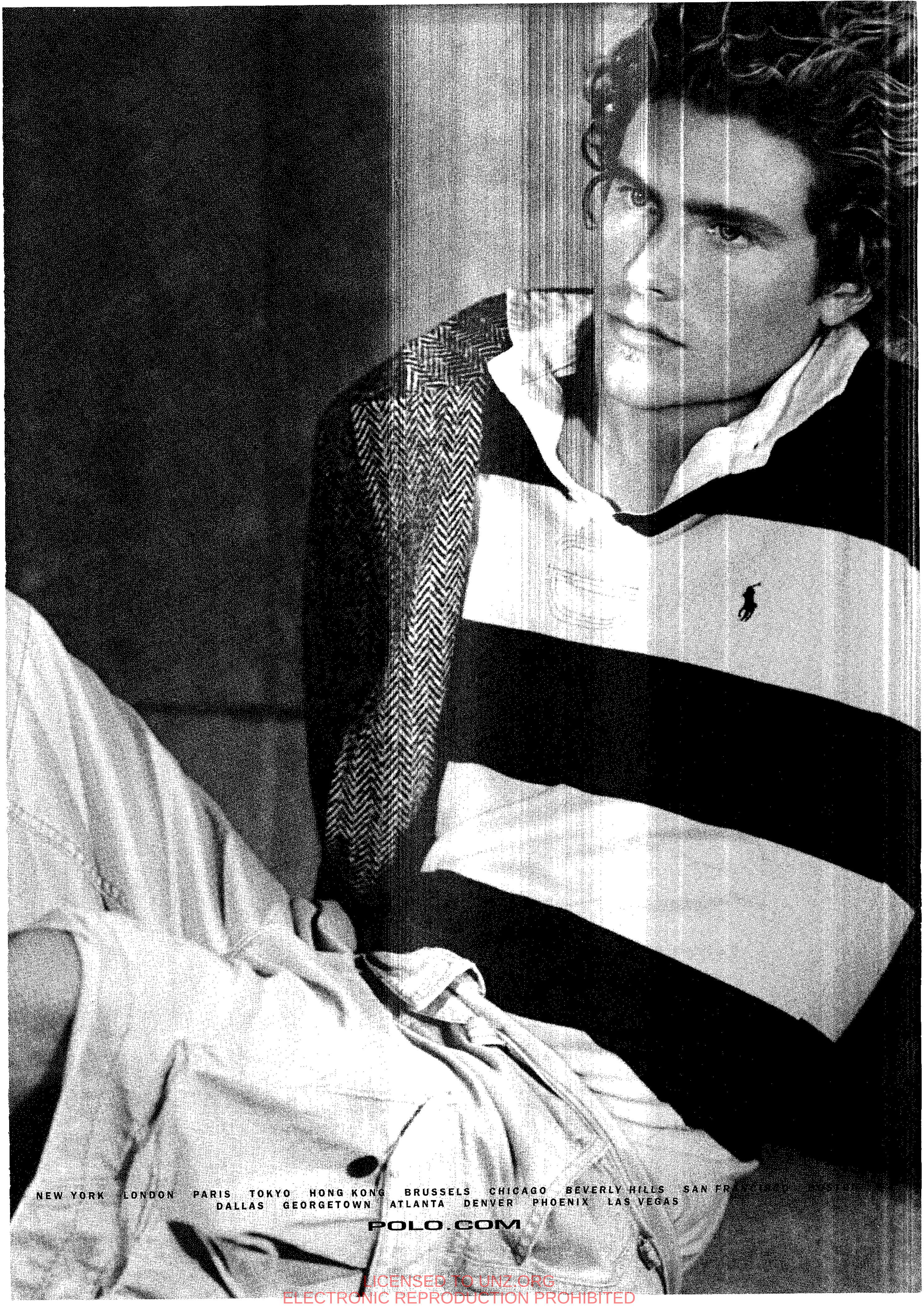
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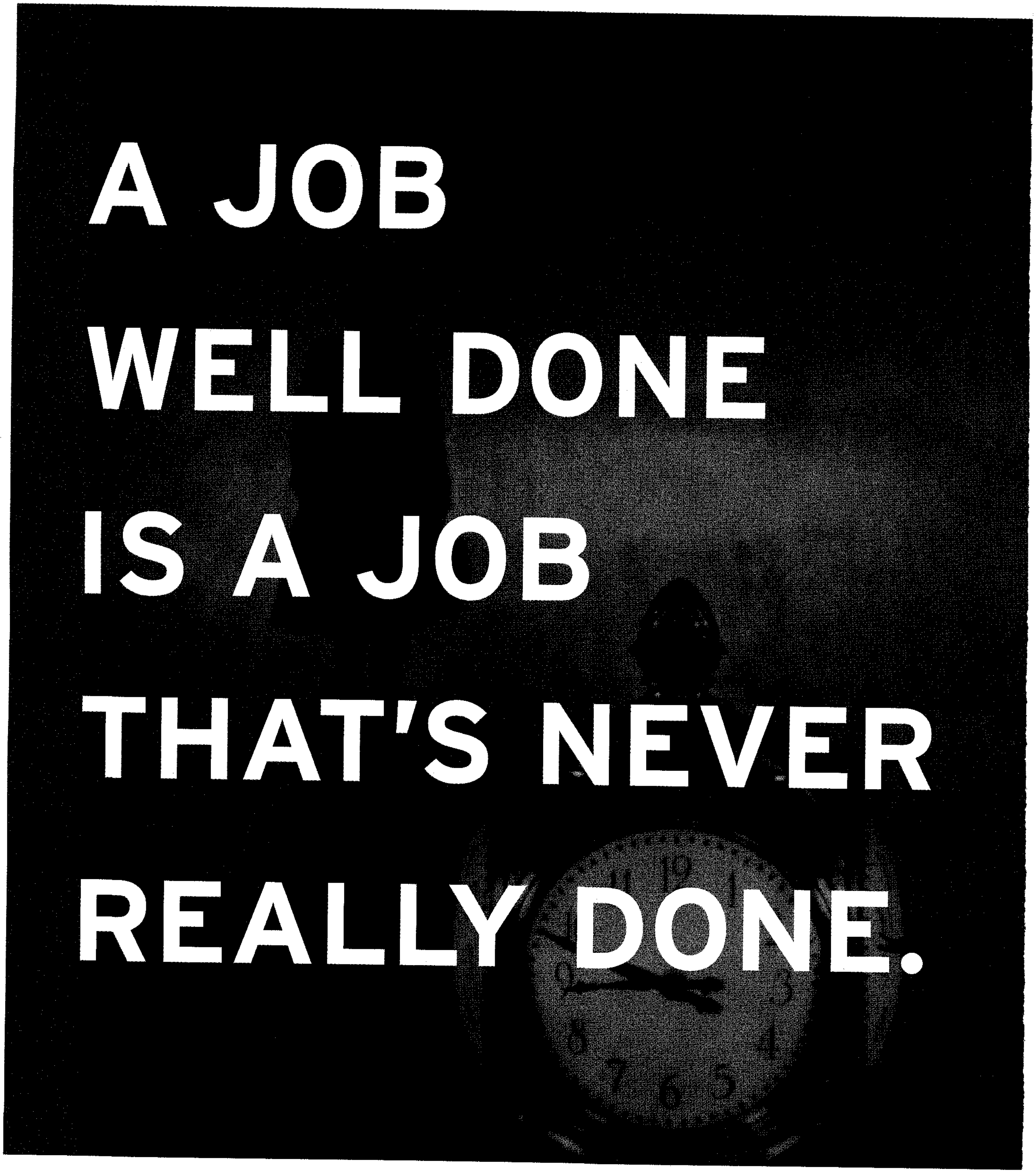

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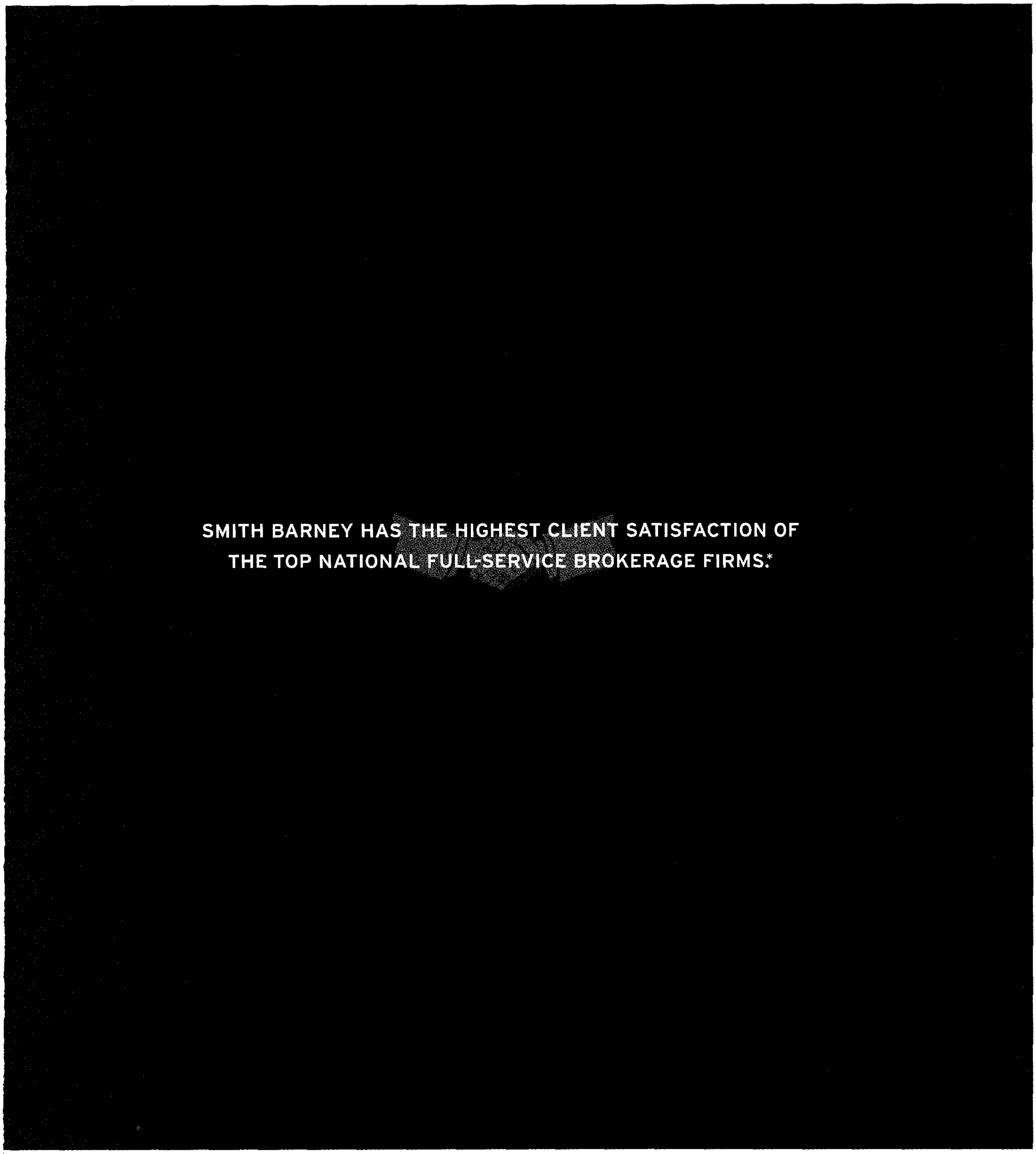
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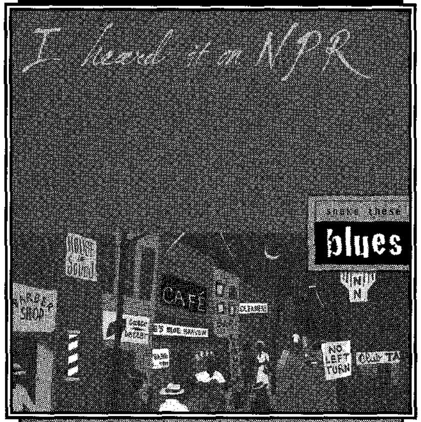

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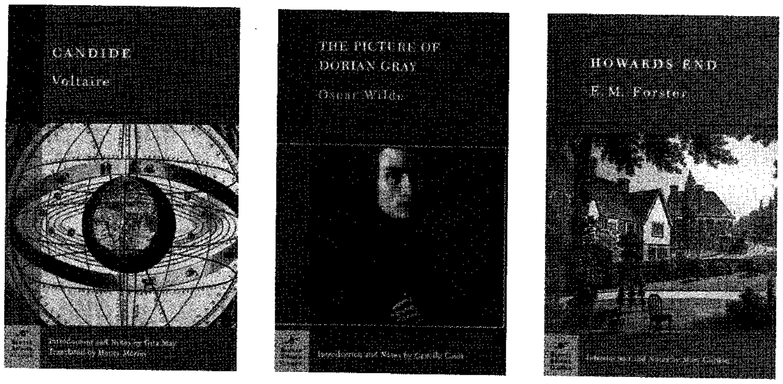
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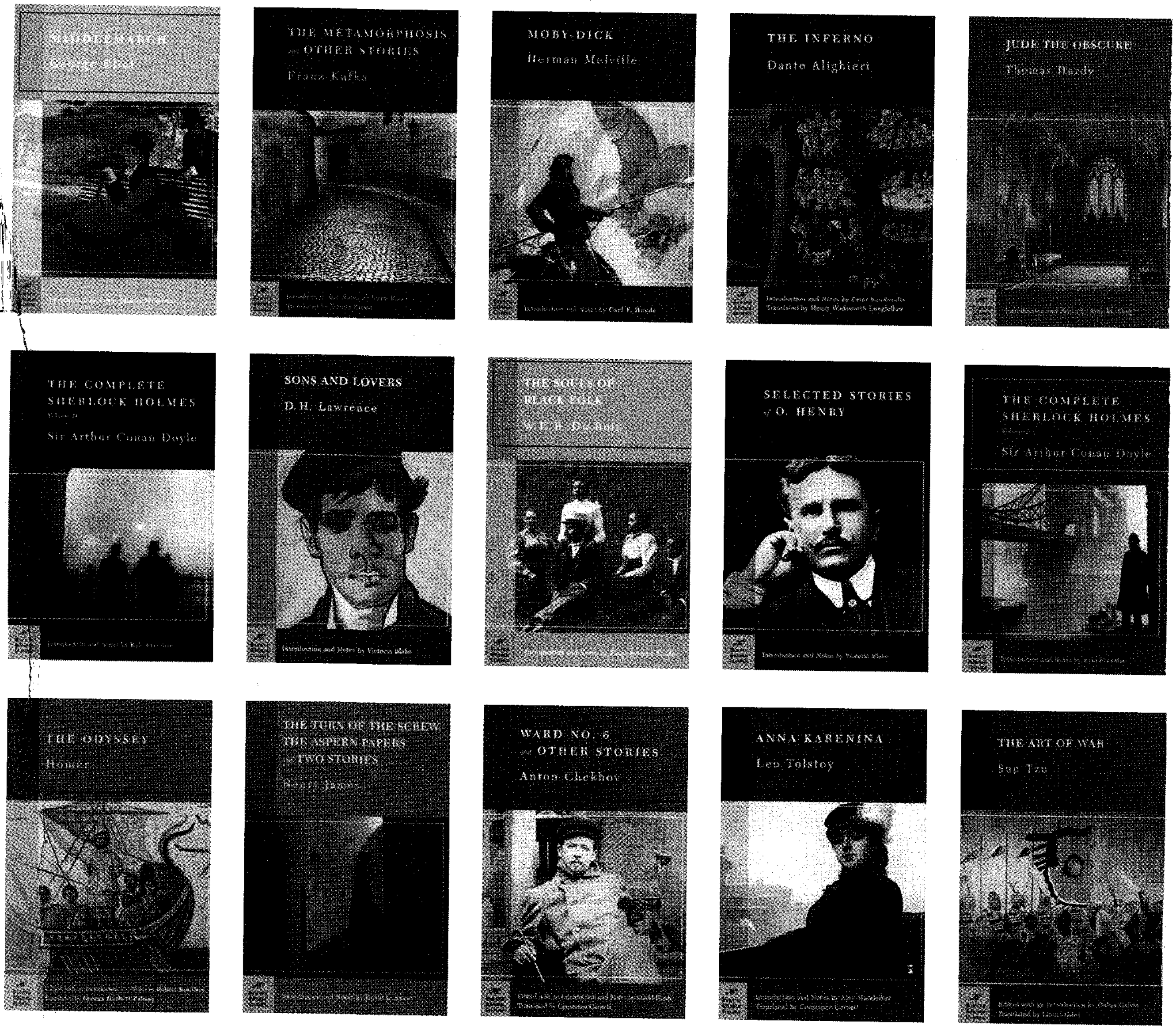
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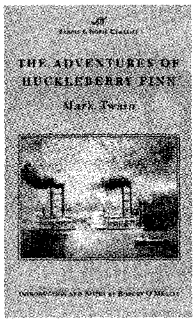
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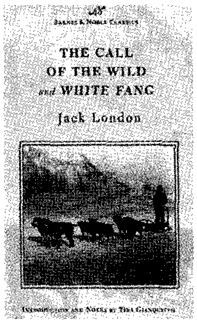
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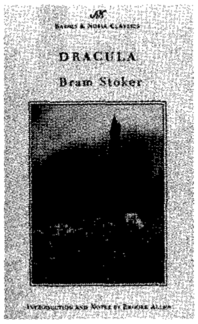
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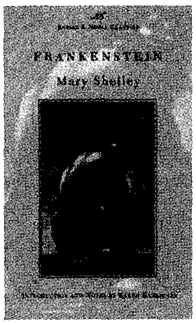
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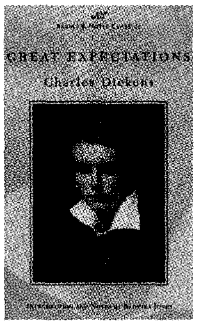
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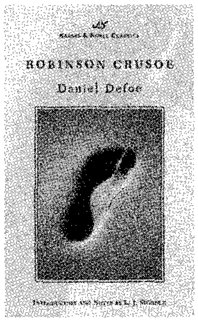
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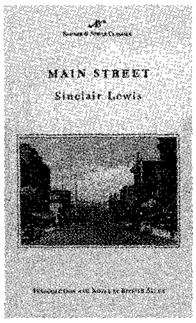
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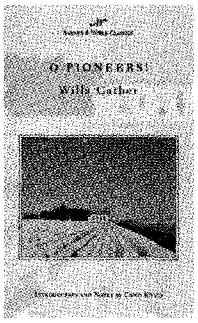
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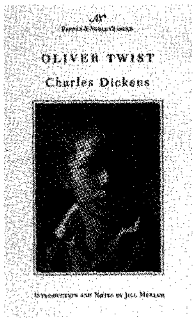
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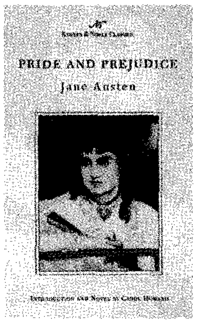
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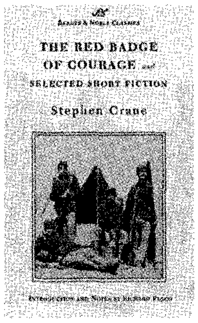
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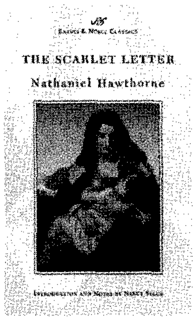
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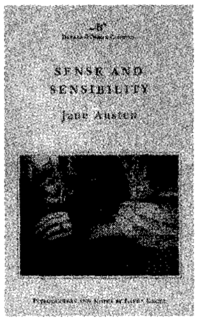
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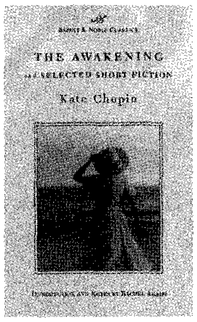
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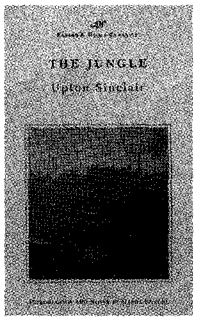
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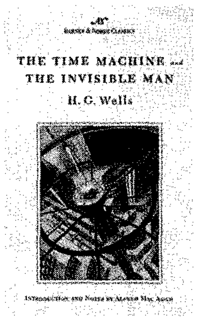
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CONTRIBUTORS

Jonathan Franzen ("The Listener," p. 84) received the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for his novel "The Corrections." "How to Be Alone," a collection of essays, is now available in paperback.

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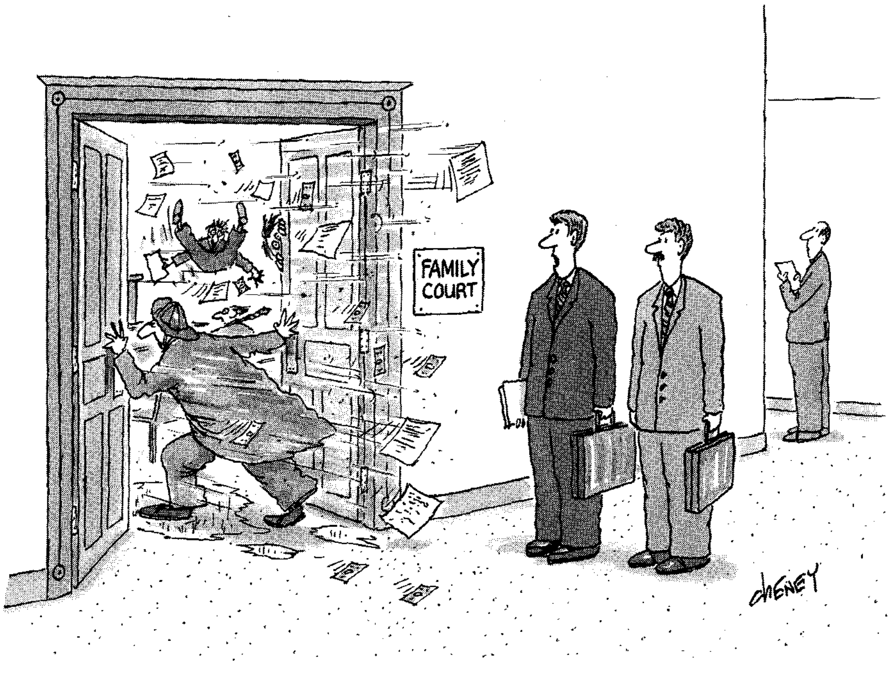
Bruce McCall (The Back Page, p. 140) has a new humor collection, "All Meat Looks Like South America," coming out next month. ♦



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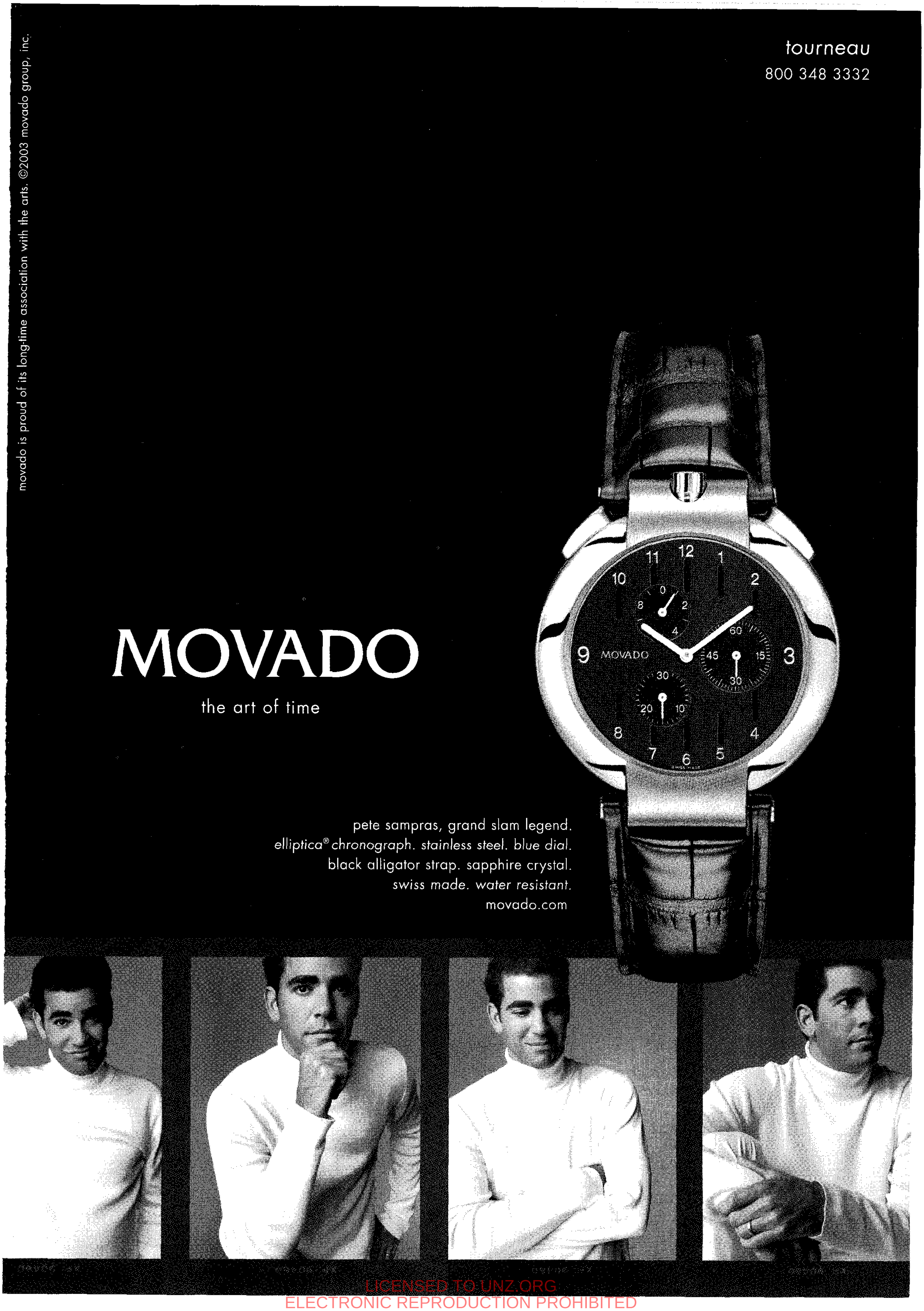

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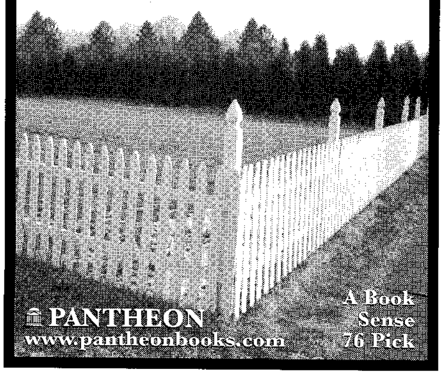

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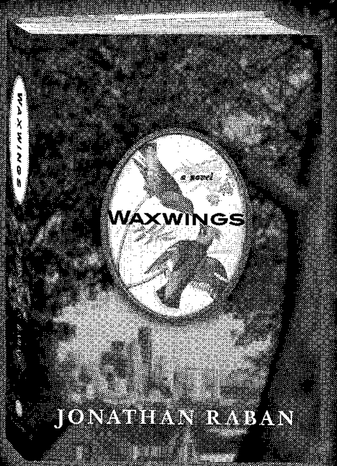

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LEFT BEHIND

Malcolm Gladwell suggests that the No Child Left Behind Act is flawed because it emulates, for education, the production principles of the Ford Motor Company (The Talk of the Town, September 15th). Henry Ford created a world-class company, a leader in its industry. More important, Ford would not have survived the competition had it not been for an emphasis on results. We must view education the same way. Good schools do operate like a business. They care about outcomes, routinely assess quality, and measure the needs of the children they serve. As I know from running Houston's schools, it takes thousands of decisions to cumulatively create a climate of excellence. But our public education system, for too long, has been a monopoly. Like all monopolies, it has been insulated from the changes that the market brings and hasn't had to respond to the needs of consumers. People are demanding change, for which the act provides a framework. The strength of the accountability movement is that if states lower their standards to propel more students over the bar parents and communities will know it, and they won't allow it. Just as Ford has shareholders to report to, these taxpayers are our stakeholders.

Gladwell describes the sanctions allowed by the act, but when a school is identified as "in need of improvement" it is designated to receive extra support to help it get on track. The testing provisions give parents and teachers information they need to help students who are struggling. Public education has always focussed on protecting the system. Now we're protecting communities and students from being forced to accept whatever the system hands them.

Rod Paige
Secretary of Education
Washington, D.C.

Gladwell's critique of the No Child Left Behind Act was on target but did not go far enough. The law will lead to teaching to the test, de-enriching curricula, and pressure on kids to drop out (as has happened in Houston) to make schools look better. The act also does not address the problems of inadequate and inequitably distributed funding, the lack of money for repairing or replacing thousands of broken-down school buildings, classes that are too large, especially in the lower grades, or the needs of the fifth of our children who live in poverty or are from families of limited English proficiency. Instead, the Bush Administration and its Republican allies in Congress waste time promoting the dangerous frivolity of school vouchers.

Edd Doerr
Silver Spring, Md.

MANCHURIAN NOVELIST

As Richard Condon's editor for a quarter of a century (though not of the pioneering "Manchurian Candidate"), I was thrilled to read the perceptive and redemptive essay by Louis Menand on Condon's work ("Brainwashed," September 15th). It always seemed to me that, at both his best and his worst, Condon could not be ranked; he was sui generis, often describing himself as not a novelist but a muralist. I would, however, take issue with the notion that he accepted the one-assassin theory of President Kennedy's death. If he did at first, he surely had a change of heart: in his best-selling "Winter Kills" (1974), he knit together (wildly and blithely) all the theories to create one Grand Conspirator. The movie that is based on the novel, which he loved, was, like "The Manchurian Candidate," not a great success at first, but went on to become a cult favorite.

Joyce Engelson
New York City

•

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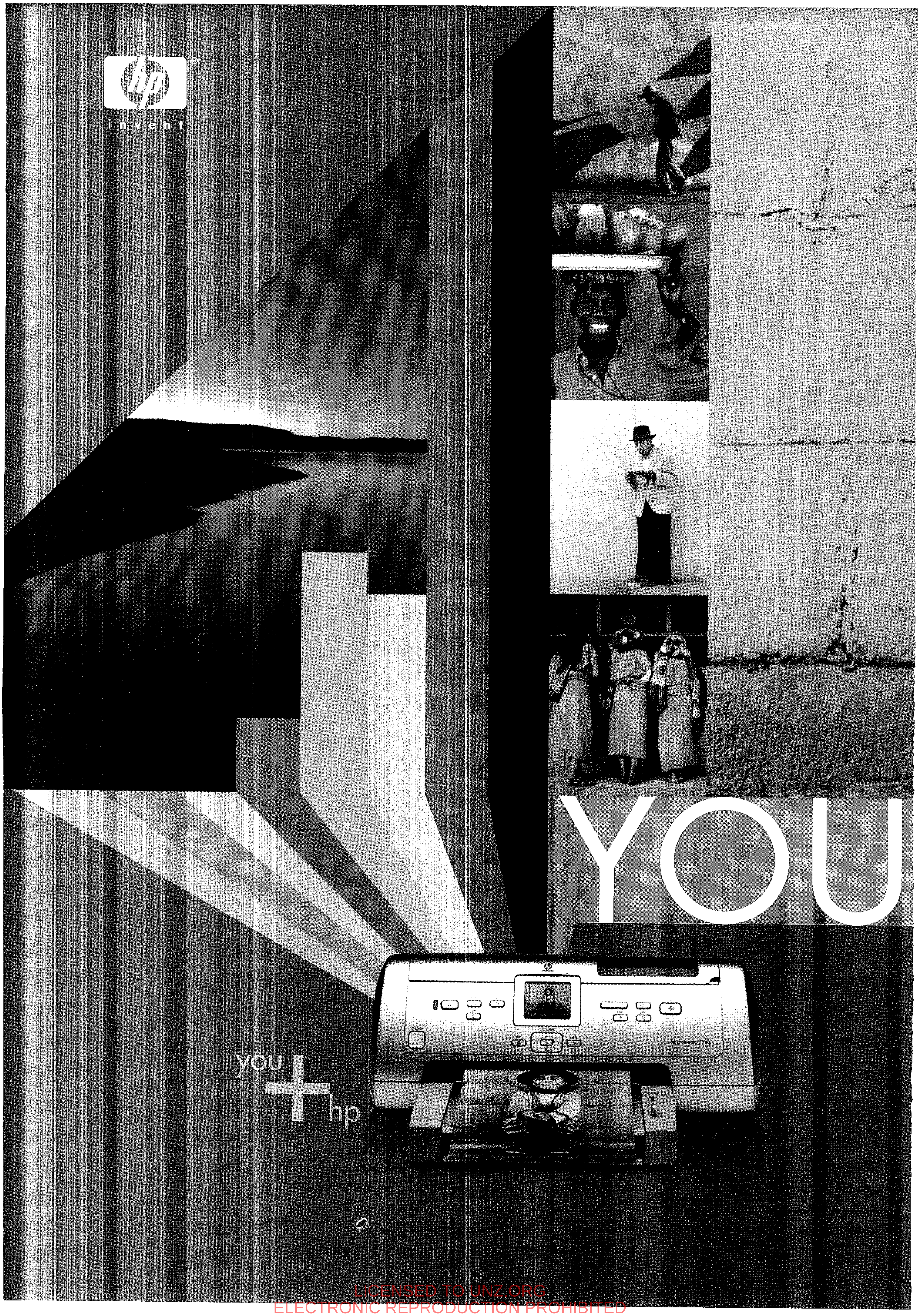
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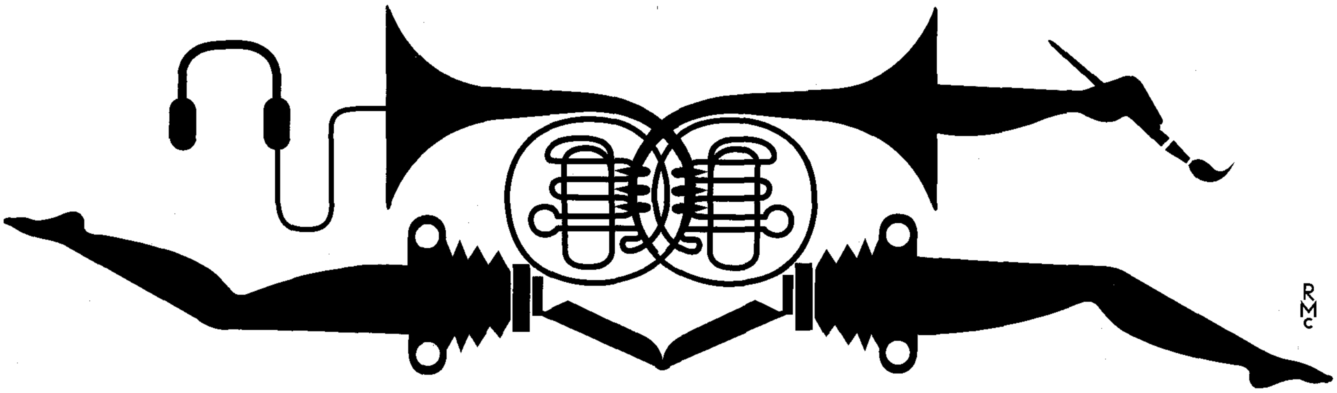

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Marian Seldes and Brian Murray perform an evening of one-act plays by Samuel Beckett and Edward Albee (a combination not seen on the New York stage since 1960), including Beckett's "Not I," "Footfalls," and "A Piece of Monologue" and Albee's "Counting the Ways." Lawrence Sacharow directs. In previews. (Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE BOY FROM OZ
The movie star Hugh Jackman stars in a new musical about the life and times of the Australian pop star Peter Allen, in which Stephanie Block plays Liza Minnelli and Beth Fowler plays Allen's mother. Directed by Philip Wm. McKinley and choreographed by Joey McKneely, with a book by Martin Sherman ("Bent") and music and lyrics by Allen and others. In previews. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE CITY
The Metropolitan Playhouse's twelfth season begins with a revival of Clyde Fitch's 1909 melodrama about political crisis and redemption in New York. Directed by Yvonne Conybeare. In previews. Opens Oct. 2 at 8. (220 E. 4th St. 212-995-5302.)

DREAM ON MONKEY MOUNTAIN
André De Shields stars in a revival of Derek Walcott's play about a lonely old man with a messianic vision, presented by the Classical Theatre of Harlem. Directed by Alfred Preisser. Previews begin Oct. 1. Opens Oct. 3 at 8. (Harlem School of the Arts Theatre, 645 St. Nicholas Ave., near 141st St. 212-868-4444.)

HENRY IV, PART ONE
The experimental-theatre director Richard Maxwell brings his version of Shakespeare's history to BAM. Opens Sept. 30 at 7:30. Through Oct. 4. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100.)

IRON
The gifted Scottish playwright Rona Munro already has one play up and running ("Bold Girls"), and now Manhattan Theatre Club presents the U.S. première of a second, a drama about a young woman who resolves to see her mother, who has been in prison for fifteen years. Directed by Anna D. Shapiro. Previews begin Oct. 2. (131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

JANE
S. N. Behrman's comic drama about a society woman whose household is sent into an uproar by the visit of her tactless sister-in-law comes to the Peccadillo Theatre Company. Directed by Dan Wackerman. Previews begin Oct. 2. Opens Oct. 5 at 3. (155 Bank St. 212-561-9635.)

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS
The musical about a bloodthirsty extraterrestrial plant and the wimpy florist who becomes its slave gets a Broadway revival. Directed by Jerry Zaks. In previews. Opens Oct. 2 at 7:15. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200.)

THE NIGHT HERON
Chris Bauer stars in a new play by Jez Butterworth about two best friends who invite a mysterious boarder to live with them in their ramshackle house on the edge of the Fens. Directed by Neil Pepe. In previews. Opens Oct. 7 at 7. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE RETREAT FROM MOSCOW
Eileen Atkins, John Lithgow, and Ben Chaplin star in a new play by William Nicholson about a man who walks out on his marriage. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. Previews begin Oct. 2. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

ROUNDING THIRD
John Rando directs a new comedy by Richard Dresser about two warring Little League coaches with drastically different ideas about winning, losing, and how to play the game. In previews. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

TO MY CHAGRIN
Peggy Shaw, the Obie-winning actress and self-described "second-generation, inbred Irish, white, butch grandmother," confronts her complicated relationship with her mixed-race grandson in a new play at P.S. 122. Directed by Lois Weaver. Opens Oct. 2 at 7:30. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-477-5288.)

TOUCH
In a play by Toni Press-Coffman, Tom Everett Scott plays an astronomer recovering from his wife's murder. Directed by Loretta Greco. In previews. (The Women's Project, 424 W. 55th St. 212-239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AVENUE Q
This musical puppet-and-people show has much to recommend it: an exceptionally gifted cast, a strong book by Jeff Whitty, equally strong music and lyrics by Robert Lopez and Jeff Marx, and the splendid direction of Jason Moore. Humans act alongside cloth co-stars—such as Princeton, a bright-eyed college grad, and two girls who want to date him, a kindergarten teacher's aide named Kate Monster and a lounge singer called Lucy T. Slut (both performed by the great Stephanie D'Abruzzo). Is it possible to be attracted to a puppet? D'Abruzzo gives Lucy so much verve that when she saunters offstage in D'Abruzzo's hand—all the puppets are handheld—you want to follow her with wolf whistles. (Reviewed in our issue of 8/11/03.) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

BERKSHIRE VILLAGE IDIOT
On the sparest of sets—a barrel with water in it, some auto-supply-shop tires, and a fish tank—and with only himself as the cast, Michael Isaac Connor conjures a whole community of macho men, scrappy kids, and sad wives in a small Massachusetts town. Friends and relations ripple out from the central, stony relationship between a vulnerable boy and his emotionally remote father—a man who went to war to avoid the (for him) more agonizing duties of being an on-call father and husband. With his quick, nervous movements, shy muscularity, intense gaze, and excellent gift for mimicry, Connor creates a working-class "Ice Storm": a work whose emotional impact sinks in slowly and lingers. Directed by Barry Edelstein. (Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 212-239-6200.)

BOLD GIRLS
Rona Munro's play depicts a day in the lives of four women struggling through life with absent men, too little money, and too much violence. Often wrenching, it's just as often funny. And Munro occasionally allows her characters an almost novelistic luxury with language, especially in the play's few monologues; this makes the play seem universal even while it's utterly real and firmly set in nineteen-nineties Belfast. Directed by Ludovica Villar-Hauser. (29th Street Rep, 212 W. 29th St. 212-868-4444.)

CELLOPHANE
Mac Wellman's 1986 work is apparently aiming at some postmodern goal like finding the substance of no substance. But, in the end, there's just no substance. What the evening does offer is some very funny wordplay and a number of fine performances by the Flea's resident company of talented young actors. Directed by Jim Simpson. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-226-2407.)

CHEKHOV'S RIFLE
Alex Ladd's jaunty new comedy takes place in a cramped apartment on the Upper West Side, where Harry (Austin Pendleton)—a jaundiced old writer whose unsuccessful plays muse on everything from Freud to Dostoyevsky to masturbation—rents his extra room to a dim but handsome young actor,

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HER FIRST YEAR ON THE LPGA TOUR.
"ROOKIE" HARDLY SEEMED APPROPRIATE.

It's no wonder the LPGA awarded Beth Bauer the 2002 Louise Suggs Rolex Rookie of the Year title. Her accomplishments could fill an oversized trophy case. Duke University All-American. AJGA Rolex Player of the Year. Eighth place at the Weetabix Women's British Open. Second at the Jamie Farr Kroger Classic. And the list goes on. This year, she's already shot a career-low 62 at the Welch's/Fry's Championship. The future of the LPGA can be summed up in two words. Beth Bauer.

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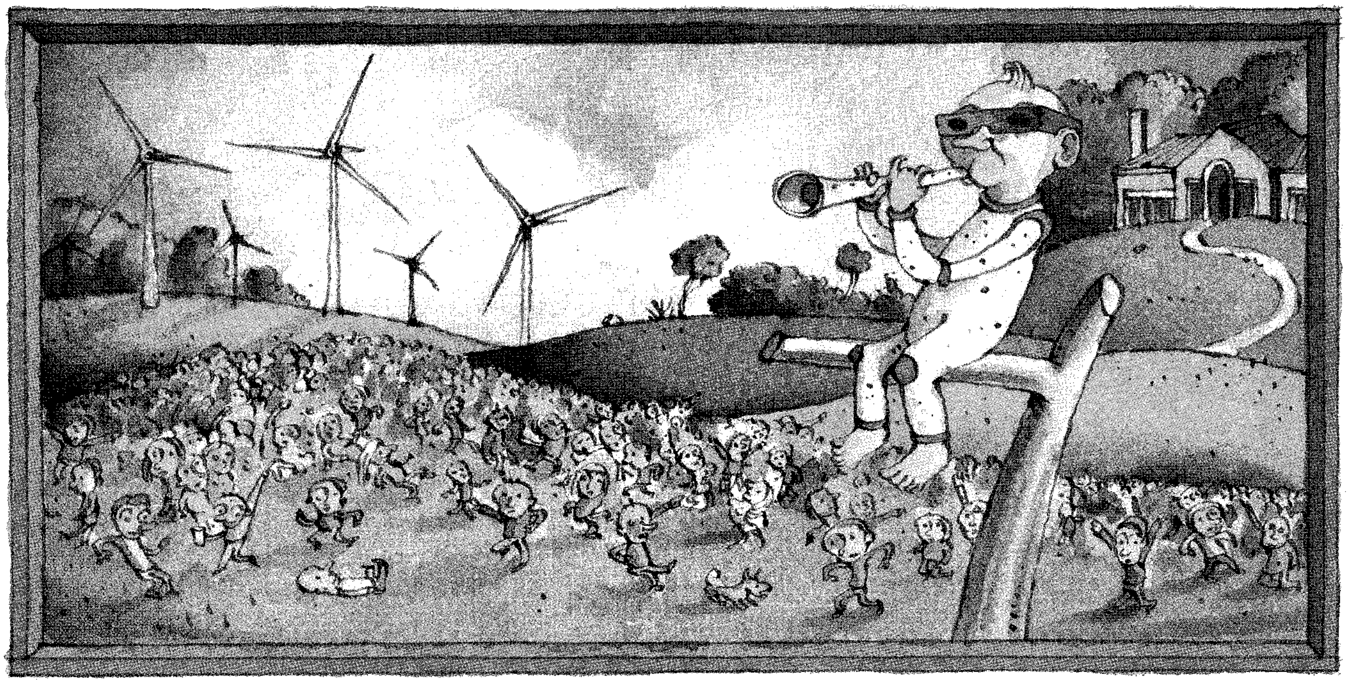

The Renewable Brooklyn music-and-art festival in Prospect Park combines big ideas and big beats (see Night Life—Concerts).

SERGIO RUZZIER

Tim (Craig Bachmann). The ensuing events combine elements of an odd-couple comedy of manners, a play within a play, farce, and, ultimately, the smoking-gun intrigue of seventies detective television. Jess Osuna, a veteran of "Kojak," "Columbo," and "Spenser: For Hire," gives an endearing performance as a portly and seemingly slow-witted police detective who reveals an astonishing literary acuity when he cracks the case. Directed by Nolan Haims. (Greenwich Street Theatre, 547 Greenwich St. 212-868-4444.)

COOKIN'
Four Korean cooks scramble to create a seven-course wedding banquet in one hour, in a comic theatrical import from Seoul that blends martial arts, Samulnori drumming, and dance. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

CUPID AND PSYCHE
Barrett Foa and Deborah Lew star in a new musical based on the myth of the beautiful mortal woman who won the love of a god. With a book and lyrics by Sean Hartley and music by Jihwan Kim. Choreographed by Devanand Janki. Directed by Timothy Childs. (John Houseman Studio, 450 W. 42nd St. 212-868-4444.)

FAR AND WIDE
In Jonathan Bank's deft adaptation of Arthur Schnitzler's cruelly blithe 1911 drama about civilized infidelity, the characters let their hearts go out to play and receive them back badly bruised. The production, directed by Bank, has returned to the Mint after a successful run last spring. (311 W. 43rd St. 212-279-4200.)

FOUR BEERS
Robert Lupone, Lee Wilkof, Guy Boyd, and Michael Cullen star in a Vanguard Theatre Group production of a new comedy by David Van Vleck about middle-aged men sharing home truths over beer at a bar. Directed by Roger Danforth. (Rattlestick, 224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444. Closes Oct. 19.)

GOOD MORNING, BILL
Keen Company presents the New York première of a 1927 romantic comedy by P. G. Wodehouse that does not involve Jeeves. Directed by Carl Forsman. (Connelly, 220 E. 4th St. 212-868-4444.)

THE HARLEQUIN STUDIES
The Signature Theatre Company kicks off its year-long Bill Irwin festival with a play that uses acrobatics and live music to explore the many sides of the commedia-dell'arte character. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

LIVING OUT
Second Stage begins its twenty-fifth season with the New York première of a play by Lisa Loomer about a Los Angeles couple who get embroiled in nanny troubles, starring Kathryn Meisle as the Anglo mother and Zilah Mendoza as the El Salvadoran nanny. Directed by Jo Bonney. (307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

MATT & BEN
This is one not to miss. In addition to being short—just over an hour—it's goofy, funny, and improbably believable. In captivating performances, Mindy Kaling (a compact Indian-American woman in a tracksuit) and Brenda Withers (a lanky Wasp in khakis and a rumpled button-down) play Ben (Affleck) and Matt (Damon), best friends from the Cambridge Rindge & Latin School, who are holed up in 1997 in a filthy apartment, squabbling as they try to write a script. When the complete screenplay to "Good Will Hunting" literally drops from the ceiling, they are both floored and their friendship is tested. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-477-5288.)

OMNIUM GATHERUM
Theresa Rebeck and Alexandra Gersten-Vassilaros bring their post-9/11 dinner-party-à-clef play to New York from Louisville, where it had its première last spring. Directed by Will Frears. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Variety Arts, 110 Third Ave. 212-239-6200.)

PORTRAITS, A CANVAS OF LIFE STORIES
Haunted by "Guernica," Picasso's response to the slaughter of innocents in the Spanish Civil War, Andrew, a downtown New York artist, feels the need to create a similarly resonant canvas centered around the events of 9/11. His painting comes together through four monologues and a dialogue, in which people who inhabit his imagination step through a large picture frame and recount the effects and aftereffects of that day on their lives. The play, written Jonathan Bell, feels like a theatrical extension of the "Portraits of Grief" series that ran in the *Times*, this time telling the stories of those who lost loved ones, and their peace of mind, after the disaster. With strong direction by Mark Pinter and assured performances by the seven-person cast, the show is a powerful and articulate reminder of why theatre matters. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 212-307-4100.)

RECENT TRAGIC EVENTS
Playwrights Horizons begins its season with a new play by Craig Wright that stars Heather Graham, in her New York stage début, as a Midwestern ad exec who goes through with a blind date the day after 9/11. With Kalimi A. Baxter, Hamish Linklater, Jesse J. Perez, and Colleen Werthmann. Directed by Michael John Garcés. (416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE RIVALS
In a delightful production at the Pearl, Sheridan's Restoration comedy gets an extra boost not only from tightly laced corsets but from skilled performances by older actors, notably Robert Hock as the imperious father Sir Anthony Absolute. With trembling hands, a gravelly voice, and an index finger that dangles like a long cigarette ash from his hand, Hock attempts to coerce his headstrong son Captain Absolute (Sean McNall) to abandon his romantic notions and marry a society lady of his father's choosing: Lydia Languish (the appealing Rachel Botchan). Even after a series of mistaken identities are resolved and every lover is properly united with his mate, Hock's vivid and funny portrayal of an old man raging against the fading of his own influence remains in the memory. Directed by Robert Neff Williams. (80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

A ROOSTER IN THE HENHOUSE
A lighthearted, lightweight romp through the ups and downs in the life of a stay-at-home dad, written and performed by John O'Hern. The show doesn't pretend to address any of the issues surrounding the trend of men staying home with their kids or of stay-at-home parents in general. But it works fine as a fondly told series of riffs that take the audience from conception to kindergarten. The best part is Mr. O'Hern's impersonations of everyone from an Irish barman to a birthing instructor who's a little too fond of her whistle. Directed by Mark S. Graham. (Lion, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

TEACHER! TEACHER!
Taylor Mali, a former schoolteacher, is now a poet. In this performance of many of his recent works, Mali is, by turns, funny, erudite, heartbreaking, argumentative, and wise. His passion for his students and his poems is invigorating; the show is a thought-provoking delight. (Bowery Poetry Club, 308 Bowery, between Houston and Bleecker Sts. 212-614-1224. Closes Oct. 4.)

THE THING ABOUT MEN
Doris Dörrie's ruefully resigned comedy of modern immorality, "Men," has become an uproarious musical—with exuberant songs about workaholism, betrayal, and compromise, performed by a cast with nimble comic timing. When the cheating ad man Tom (Marc Kudisch, who nails the "lovable jerk" character and also has a great baritone) finds

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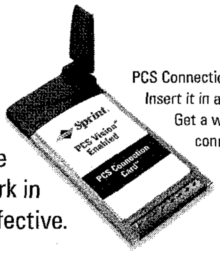

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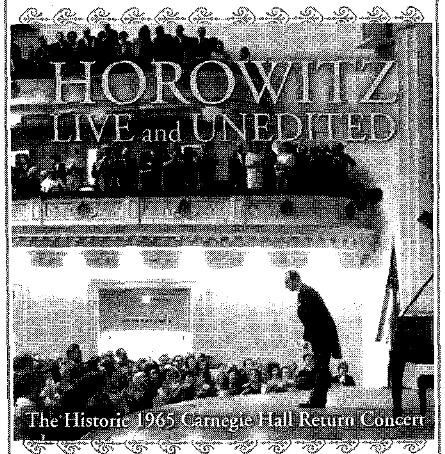
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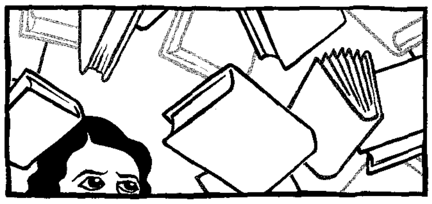

TONY MILLIONAIRE

SO MANY BOOKS, SO LITTLE TIME: A YEAR OF PASSIONATE READING (Putnam), by Sara Nelson, takes as its title the exasperated cry of literary professionals everywhere, a cry that is echoed by the nearly simultaneous publication of the almost identically titled **SO MANY BOOKS: READING AND PUBLISHING IN AN AGE OF ABUNDANCE**, by Gabriel Zaid, translated from the Spanish by Natasha Wimmer (Paul Dry Books). Nelson describes herself as an insomniac who is "ravenous for books," and she structures her own book as a record of a single year's reading, during which time she devours everything from J. M. Coetzee to Somerset Maugham to Mary Higgins Clark to a dictionary of hipster slang. From this starting point, Nelson examines phenomena that will make many readers smile with recognition: the false importance of an overhyped book, the recommendation from a friend that makes you think less of your friend, and, most dreaded of all, the book you feel guilty for not having read.

Where Nelson's approach is personal, Zaid traces the preoccupation with reading back through Dr. Johnson, Seneca, and even the Bible ("Of making many books there is no end"). He emerges as a playful celebrant of literary proliferation, noting that there is a new book published every thirty seconds, and optimistically points out that publishers who moan about low sales "see as a failure what is actually a blessing: The book business, unlike newspapers, films, or television, is viable on a small scale." Zaid, who claims to own more than ten thousand books, says he has sometimes thought that "a chastity glove for authors who can't contain themselves" would be a good idea. Nonetheless, he cheerfully opines that "the truly cultured are capable of owning thousands of unread books without losing their composure or their desire for more."

—*Leo Carey*

out that his wife (Leah Hocking) is having an affair, he hunts down her lover, Sebastian (the dreamy tenor Ron Bohmer), and moves in with him incognito. With music by Jimmy Roberts and a book and lyrics by Joe DiPietro. Directed by Mark Clements. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.)

TRUMBO
In 1947, the House Un-American Activities Committee accused Dalton Trumbo—the screenwriter for such movies as "Spartacus" and "Roman Holiday"—of Communist leanings, and during the next thirteen years he was banned from working in his chosen field. In his son Christopher Trumbo's moving and evocative stage portrait of him, based on letters Trumbo wrote to his family, friends, and enemies, a rotating roster of stars takes the lead role, reading Trumbo's letters, and Gordon MacDonald plays Christopher, providing the narration that binds them together. Directed by Peter Askin. (9/15/03) (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.)

LONG RUNS

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4747.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747.

BLUE MAN GROUP
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 212-254-4370.

BOOBS! THE MUSICAL
Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 212-239-6200.

CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-239-6200.

CARNIVAL KNOWLEDGE
SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 212-239-6200.

CHICAGO
Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.

DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 212-239-6200.

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.

42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.

GYPSY
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

HAIRSPRAY
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100.

I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.

KIKI AND HERB: COUP DE THÉÂTRE
Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St., between Bedford and Hudson Sts. 212-239-6200. (Closes Oct. 4.)

THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.

MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544.

MOVIN' OUT
Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4100.

NINE
Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 212-921-8000.

STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 212-477-2477.

TAKE ME OUT
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.

THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE
Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100.

URINETOWN
Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.

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DANCE

MOMIX
Critics may yawn, but crowds go wild over the trancelike, humorous, and erotic illusions of Moses Pendleton's corps; indeed, the company is one of the few thriving for-profit dance companies in the U.S. The season features several evening-length pieces, all of them repertory, and each structured as a series of vignettes on a theme, including "Baseball" (about the American love affair with the game), "Opus Cactus" (a nineteen-part desert saga), and "Passion," a meditation on the human experience, set to Peter Gabriel's sensual score for the film "The Last Temptation of Christ." (Eighth Ave. at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Oct. 1-3 and Oct. 7 at 8, Oct. 4 at 2 and 8, and Oct. 5 at 2 and 7:30. Through Oct. 12.)

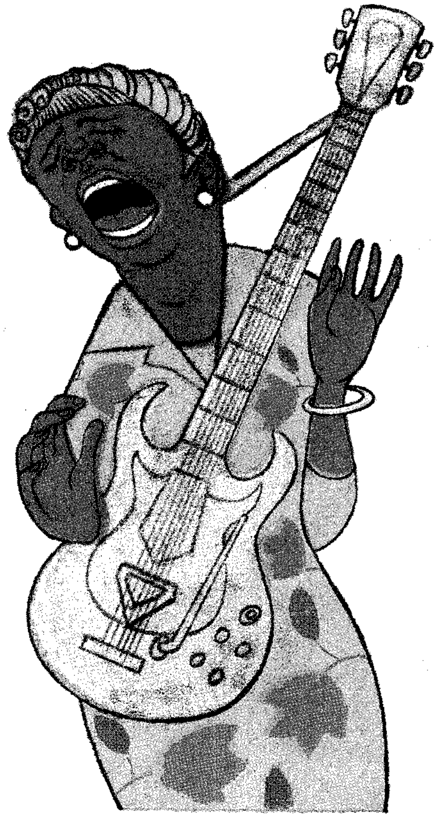
BALLETT FRANKFURT
In his final season as the Ballett's artistic director—after which the company will cease to exist—William Forsythe presents a no-frills program of four dances that display the dancers' astounding technique and his own prolific invention. The dances recall Balanchine's "leotard" ballets in their spare approach to costuming: they also dispense with the text, projections, and other multimedia theatrics that characterized Forsythe's previous BAM programs. Although twenty identical metal tables do get pushed quickly onstage in the piece "One Flat Thing, Reproduced," the tables recede the instant the dancers begin to climb, slide, and wiggle, becoming frames that set off the company's ferocious motion. For this piece, Thom Willems creates a cyclonic roar of noise, but for the other three the only accompaniment to the dancers' twirling, rippling, and interlocking is intermittent wisps of piano music or electronic sound and the dancers' own audible breaths. (BAM's Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Oct. 2-4 at 7:30 and Oct. 5 at 3. ♦ Note: A dialogue with William Forsythe takes place Oct. 2 at 6, at BAM Rose Cinemas.)

U THEATRE
As part of BAM's Next Wave festival, the Taiwanese movement-theatre collective presents "The Sound of Ocean," an interdisciplinary piece that, as the title suggests, is primarily an aural experience. In rhythmic and tonal patterns that ebb and flow at a symphonic pace, intermittently tapped drums evoke raindrops, then a torrent, and gongs reverberate with an oceanic roar. The members of the troupe double the soundscape with dance that can be as slow and fluid as Tai Chi or—when drummers leap and spin to strike—as explosive as martial arts. Intensely disciplined, the performers create a ritual that approaches their stated goal of bringing inner peace to their audiences, but all that serenity may tax some attention spans. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Oct. 7 at 7:30. Through Oct. 11.)

TERE O'CONNOR DANCE
In 2000, the choreographer's "Hi Everybody!" rocked the dance scene with its excruciatingly funny, bitter text, which was souped up with lots of hamming from the dancer-actors. In his new piece, "Lawn," a commentary on human interaction with the environment, O'Connor leaves out the text, but his five dancers use dramatic facial expressions and sharp hand gestures to tell a tale about craven human attitudes toward nature. Using a rich language of movement, they string symbols together like poetry, writing a rebus in motion. Ben Speth's video, which hangs above the dancers, framed in fake leaves, flashes a montage of cautionary images of urban decay, cultivation, and embattled wilderness, complementing O'Connor's engrossing spatial storytelling, and James Baker, a longtime O'Connor collaborator, provides an eclectic, filmic score with whistling, garage-style drumming, and electronically modified natural sounds. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-691-6500. Oct. 1-4 at 7. Through Oct. 18.)

"WILD LIFE/A MOVEMENT REFUGE"
In a playfully thoughtful evening-length work by the California-based choreographer Wendy Rogers, six colorfully clad dancers leap like gazelles or hack through imaginary underbrush in a dance that echoes the struggles of bipeds in the urban savannah, navigating crowded apartments and sidewalks and slashing through urban debris. A soundscape engineered by Jay Cloidt blends high-tech and no-tech: the buzz of engines alternates with the rustle of wind moving through a wheat field. Some sought-after dancers have joined Rogers' première, including Allyson Green, Monica Bill Barnes, and Christopher Williams. As the dancers change their positions, they conjure different settings, making space seem to open and close around them. (Danspace Project at St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. Oct. 2-4 at 8:30 and Oct. 5 at 7:30.)

"A"
A choreographer who describes her first evening-length work as a "post-post-modern, anti-minimalist, and subversive" reaction in "movement and text" to Yvonne Rainer's "Trio A" puts herself at risk of being accused of pretense. Yet Carlotta Sagna's portentously titled piece is so assuredly and beautifully performed that it achieves its overweening ambitions. The obvious relationship of "A" to Rainer's much studied 1966 piece is that it concerns the act of performing. But whereas Rainer's trio was built on "pedestrian" movement, Sagna builds hers on the outsized egos of the performers, so that even affectless bits done in loose unison—walking, running, falling—take on bristling personality. The superb Antoine Effroy starts the action, entering the stage in slow motion, bare-chested, hands behind his back like a P.O.W.; he is followed by Sagna and Lisa Gunstone, who breaks out in a non-stop lover's monologue. Sagna and Effroy attempt to pacify her with praise, until their excessive compliments take on the tone of insult. When Gunstone rolls and climbs into Effroy's arms, seeking attention, he throws her around as if she were a crumpled paper cup, impervious to her need. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793, ext. 11. Oct. 1-4 at 8.)



A tribute to Sister Rosetta Tharpe, at the Bottom Line (see Night Life).

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

"APARICIONES"
Two Southern companies join in a shared concert with loosely connected themes. Elsa Valbuena's Florida-based Gaudere Danza performs "Sin Fin"

("Without End"), an ensemble work about mourning set to a commissioned score by the double-bassist Dee Moses, and "Marbleized Memories," a solo by Valbuena accompanied live by Moses. The Texas-based Kista Tucker Dance Company presents four pieces, the newest of which is "I Am, We Are," a reflection on the individual and interconnectedness, set to music by the French composer Yann Tiersen ("Amélie"). (Merce Cunningham Studio, 55 Bethune St. 585-330-7751. Oct. 3 at 9 and Oct. 4 at 8.)

"(NOB)ODYSSEY'S"
Iannis Michaloudis's punning, hyper-literate reëxamination of Homer's Odyssey, in which text flashes across the dancers' masks, continues its run at La Mama Annex. The title of the show is meant to be pronounced "nobody sees"—an allusion to Odysseus' cunning way of hiding his identity from the Cyclops who held him captive: when Polyphemos asked his prisoner his name, he answered, "Nobody." Choreographed by Harry Mavromichalis. (La Mama Annex, 74A E. 4th St. 212-475-7710. Oct. 2-4 at 7:30 and Oct. 5 at 2:30 and 7:30. Through Oct. 8.)

"SENSEDANCE"
Henning Rübsam's versatile company performs new and repertory works in a season at the Joyce SoHo that features "Garden," a women's group dance set to traditional Iraqi music, "Petit Pas," a pas de deux performed by Rübsam and Erika Pujic, and a solo, danced by Rübsam, set to Brahms's Gesänge, Opus 6. The prima ballerina assoluta Eva Evdokimova joins the group, performing a solo called "Litanei & Frühlingsglaube," set to two pieces by Schubert, which Rübsam choreographed for her. (155 Mercer St. 212-334-7479. Oct. 2-5 at 8.)

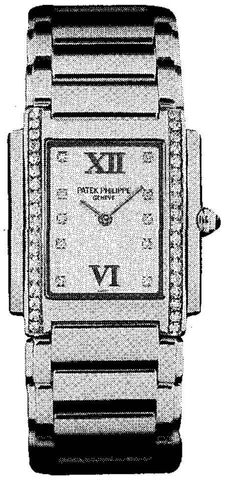
NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

"HIGHLIGHTS IN JAZZ"
The eighty-two-year-old **Billy Taylor** and the thirty-year-old **Cyrus Chestnut** share a talent for dexterous piano work and a commitment to communication. Both men keep their audience firmly in mind; Taylor's melodic bebop and Chestnut's gospel-tinged flights provide awe and entertainment in equal measures. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. 212-220-1460. Oct. 2 at 8.)

"SOUNDCHECK"
The monthly series at the Whitney brings in **David Hamburger's Gowanus Valley Orchestra.** Hamburger, a Boston native, onetime New Yorker, and current resident of Austin, Texas, is a well-travelled Dobro and guitar player—he's played support for the likes of Freedy Johnston and Joan Baez. On his own, he revitalizes American roots music through intricate playing and lyrical references that touch on everything from the Flatbush skyline to railroad dining cars. (Madison Ave. at 75th St. 212-570-3676. Oct. 3 at 7.)

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
The pianist **George Cables** and the bassist Rufus Reid were linchpins of the saxophonist Dexter Gordon's mighty quartet in the late seventies. Cable's horn-playing guests at this tribute to the great tenor stylist are **Wayne Escoffrey, Jimmy Greene,** and **Jerry Weldon.** With the Cables trio at their backs, these three up-and-comers will be sure to swing. (Kaplan Penthouse, Rose Building, Lincoln Center. 212-721-6500. Oct. 2-4 at 8.)

"RENEWABLE BROOKLYN"
Bari Franklin, a thirty-six-year-old former fashion designer who lives in Greenpoint, and a group of liked-minded people have called upon a few friends—including the noted underground hip-hop producer **Dan the Automator** (who is appearing here with the Handsome Boy Modeling School, featuring **Prince Paul,** and with Head Automatica, a new collaboration with members of the forward-leaning hardcore band Glassjaw), the electronic alchemists **2 Many DJs,** and the funk rockers **Outhud** and **Radio 4**—for a festival promoting conservation and sustainable design. This translates as a day of musical performances, art installations, and environmental-education efforts, some of which are sure to go down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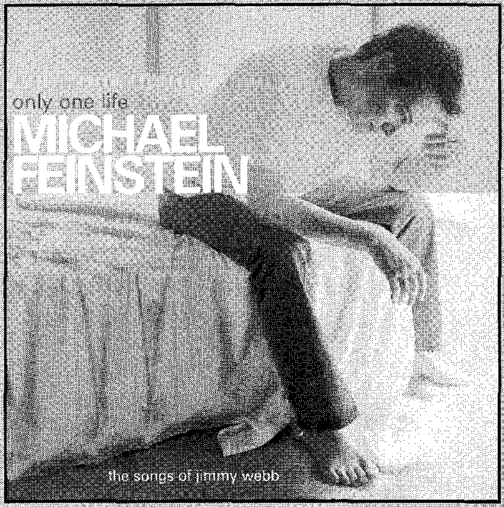

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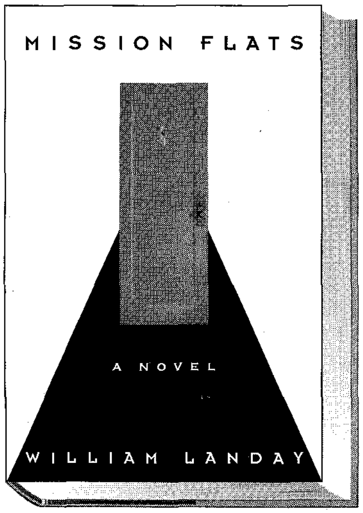

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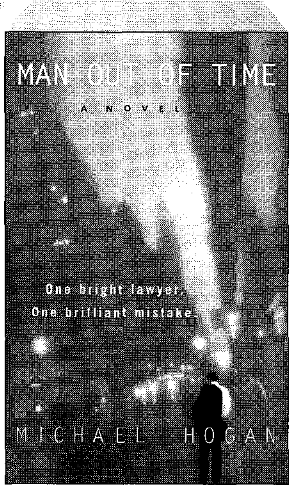

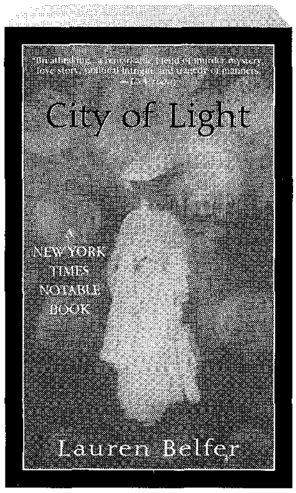

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R.E.M.
Despite never fully recovering from the departure of the drummer Bill Berry, who left the group in 1997, R.E.M. can still claim the title of America's preëminent alternative-rock band. Ample proof can be found on the compilation they're currently promoting: "In Time: The Best of R.E.M., 1988-2003." (Madison Square Garden. 212-307-7171. Oct. 4 at 8.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
The Argyll-based ensemble Capercaillie offers an evening of captivating Scottish music. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. For more information, call 212-545-7536. Oct. 4 at 8.)

ALL AMERICAN REJECTS
Using loud guitar rock to passionately lament the quandaries of teen-age romance may be an ancient formula, but the All American Rejects manage to make the clichés sound fresh. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 212-307-7171. Oct. 7 at 7.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Oct. 7: Formerly the front man for the hedonistic Southern rockers the Black Crowes, **Chris Robinson** has embarked upon a solo turn that's a little less raucous but no less rootsy. Shameless celebrity spotters might want to attend on the off chance that they might catch a glimpse of the actress Kate Hudson, the lanky and hirsute rocker's celebrated (and visibly pregnant) spouse, swaying beatifically offstage.

BOTTOM LINE
15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (212-228-6300)—Oct. 1: The spirit of Sister Rosetta Tharpe, the fire-fingered, guitar-wielding gospel singer who died in 1973, is conjured up as **Odetta, Maria Muldaur,** the **Holmes Brothers,** the **Dixie Hummingbirds,** and others pay tribute to the musical pioneer. Oct. 3: The Brooklyn-born old-time folk hero **Ramblin' Jack Elliott.** Note: At press time the nearly thirty-year-old club was fighting eviction by its landlord, New York University, for failing to pay its rent.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Oct. 5: The sexually assertive Canadian performer **Peaches** (a.k.a. Merill Nisker) and her purposely crude, lo-fi electronica. Oct. 7: One of the few country bands with a fervent rock-and-roll following, the **Mavericks** spent the better part of the nineties turning out elegant prairie pop that owed more to the crisp harmonies of the Everly Brothers than to the glitz of Nashville. The band went on hiatus five years ago as the front man Raul Malo developed a solo career. The group has a new guitarist, Eddie Perez, as well as a new self-titled release, its first studio album since 1998's "Trampoline."

FEZ
380 Lafayette St. (212-533-7000)—Oct. 3-4: The **Losers Lounge** pays tribute to George Harrison. The **Mingus Big Band** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Oct. 1-2: The singer-songwriter **Howie Day.** Oct. 3-4: The fiercely talented Welsh pop group **Super Furry Animals** and the spacey, ambivalent rock of California's **Grandaddy.**

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)— Oct. 7: **Royston Langdon.** Leaving his retro-glam ensemble Spacehog—that mid-nineties band of one-hit-wonders—in the dust, the British vocalist (and husband of Liv Tyler) goes solo.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—Oct. 3: The **Trachtenburg Family Slideshow Players,** featuring the nine-year-old drummer Rachel Trachtenburg. With **Schwervon!,** a local male-female, guitar-drums rock duo with a thing for songs about food. Also on Oct. 3: **Nad Navillus** is the brainchild of the anagrammatically inclined Midwestern singer-songwriter Dan Sullivan. The skillful and nuanced guitar player (his other band, the Butcher Shop Quartet, performs his arrangement of Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring" for two guitars, bass, and drums) writes melodic, intricate songs with confessional overtones.

LUXX
256 Grand St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-599-1000)—Oct. 3: **Mexico 1910,** a passionate instrumental four-piece band from New Orleans, makes a rare foray up North. A classic two-guitar-bass-and-drum outfit, the group has echoes of bands like godspeed you! black emperor and Mogwai; they give priority to dynamic shifts and potent melodic surges. With their like-minded compadres, the eight-piece instrumental combo **My Education** from Austin, Texas.

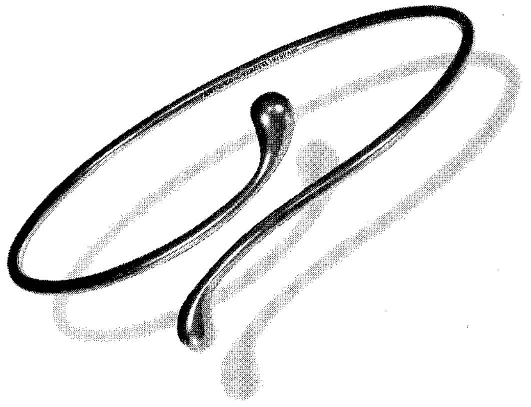
MAXWELL'S
1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-653-1703)—Oct. 5: For nearly twenty years, the members of the

TABLES FOR TWO

JUSTIN'S
31 W. 21st St. (212-352-0599)—There is circumstantial evidence that the party promoter turned rapper turned self-promoter Sean (Puffy) Combs opened his Flatiron-district restaurant several years ago to satisfy his need for good soul food on demand: Justin's is only a limo's length away from the clubs he is reputed to enjoy, and he's known to put in the occasional appearance. If you had had a reservation on a recent Sunday night, for instance, you would have received a call in the evening telling you, over the din of an R. & B.-inflected rap duet, that "something came up" and, regrettably, the restaurant would be closing early. If you still managed to slip in for the last seating, behind a group of eight church ladies dressed in monochromatic berry- and cantaloupe-colored suits, two of whom had come "all the way from California!" and who would have been bitterly disappointed if they didn't get to try the food, you might have learned from a less than canny waiter that Puffy was throwing a bachelor party for one of his friends later that night. That would explain the bouquets of helium balloons bobbing from the railings on the dais-like dining floor and the high-running nerves of the staff. But would it explain why they were out of red velvet cake, again?

Justin's is named after Puffy's young son, but almost everything else is named after Puffy himself. There is a menu of twelve-dollar Martinis that come in church-lady shades—the Fruit Punch Diddy, the Lemon Diddy, the Passion Diddy, the plain old P. Diddy ("need we say more . . .")—and one, the Sexy Blue (vodka, peach schnapps, pineapple juice, and blue curaçao), that's the color of something you wish they'd clean the bathroom with. (The crowd sometimes mistakes the place for a late-night club, and it shows.) The fried-chicken plate—with a side of mac and cheese—is delicious, and so is P. Diddy's Jumbo Fried Shrimp, which one waiter referred to as the "Puffy Shrimp," revealing the deep confusion about nomenclature that continues to plague Mr. Daddy. Moguls should probably try the Mogul Combo, a five-appetizer platter that includes catfish fritters and B.B.Q. wings and is nicely complemented by the Players Extreme Punch (seven shots and real fruit juices) or a four-hundred-and-fifty-dollar bottle of Cristal. (Open daily for dinner and Sundays for brunch. Entrées $16-$39.)

—Dana Goodyear



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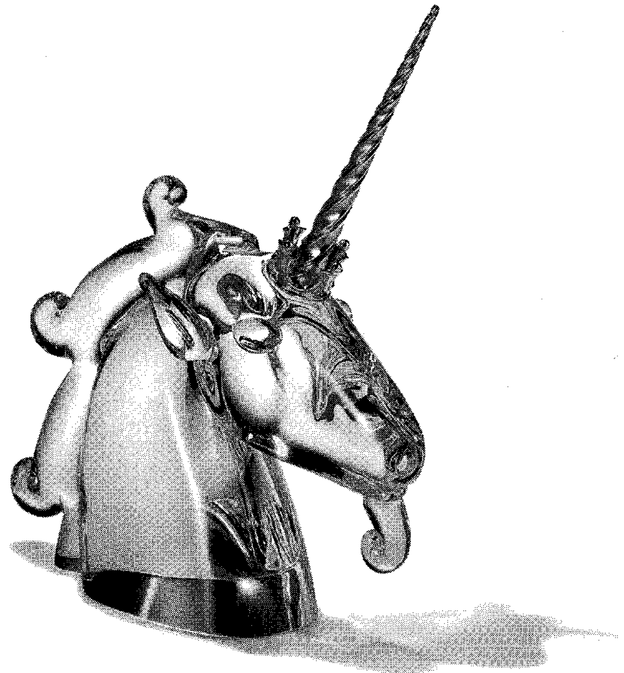

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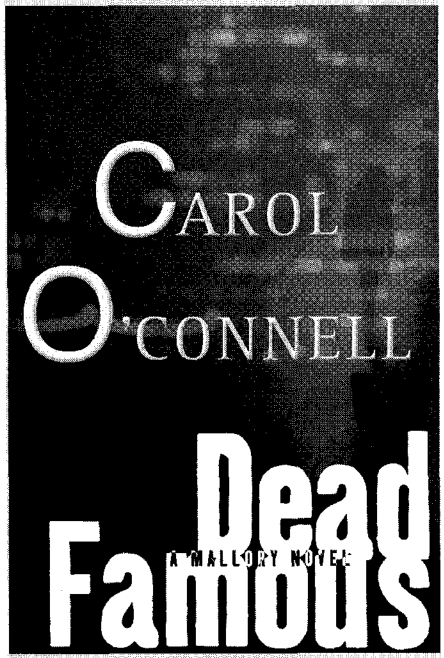

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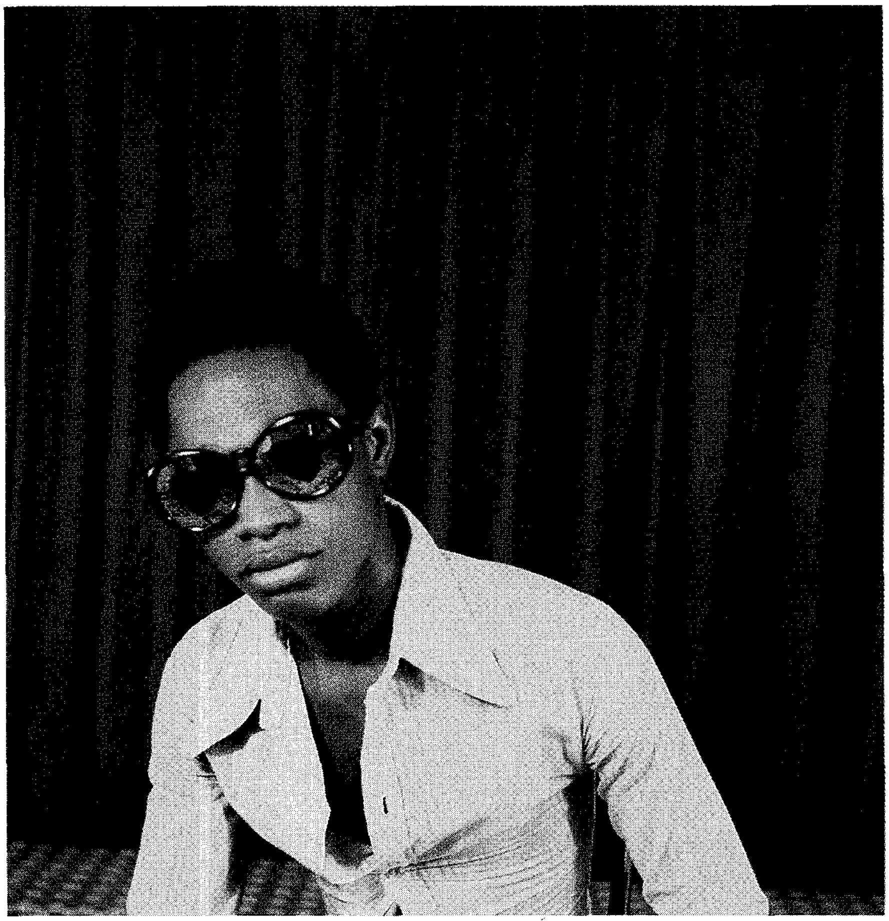

"Self-Portrait, 1978," by Samuel Fosso, at Shainman (see Photography).

Welsh rock group **Gorky's Zygotic Mynci** have been subverting the genre to enormously entertaining effect. Songs in their native tongue and paeans to mowing the lawn are just two examples of the steady eccentricity that serves them so well.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—Oct. 2: The college-rock favorites **Rainer Maria.** With the glorious melancholy of **Denali.** Oct. 6: **Gorky's Zygotic Mynci** (see Maxwell's).

NORTHSIX
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-599-5103)—Oct. 6-8: The sensitive proto-punk icon **Jonathan Richman** settles in for a three-night stand.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Oct. 1-4: The **Gonzalo Rubalcaba** trio. How the Cuban expatriate Rubalcaba ditched a tropical climate only to get mellower and more relaxed in the United States is anyone's guess. Where this reformed keyboard abuser once crammed in forty notes when four were called for, he now savors the joys of concision, jettisoning technique for personality. Having Ignacio Berroa, one of the unsung giants of jazz drumming, on his team hasn't hurt a bit either.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—It takes guts to slip Randy Newman's "Short People" and Suzanne Vega's "Tom's Diner" alongside classics by Cole Porter and Stephen Sondheim, but the British sensation **Maria Friedman** (here through Oct. 11) has the theatrical flair and the sumptuous voice to pull off both hearty standards and well-chosen left-of-center material.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Sept. 30-Oct. 11: **Tony Danza.** He sings, he tells jokes, he plays piano and trumpet, he dances; if you asked him to, Danza would probably recite Shakespearean sonnets. If he's not world class in any of his onstage abilities, his infectious enthusiasm is hard to beat.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Through Oct. 5: Age is not making **Jimmy Scott's** already ravaged voice any more supple. But few jazz singers can make vocal imperfections translate into expressive effects like this resilient legend. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Oct. 2: The **Jeremy Pelt** quartet. Another of the whip-smart trumpeters that seem to abound these days, Pelt has seen action with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. Oct. 3-5: The guitarist **Peter Bernstein** pays tribute to the six-string giant Wes Montgomery.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Oct. 1: **Avishai Cohen,** the bass wizard powering Chick Corea's acoustic piano trio, enlists his own band for his compositions and occasional keyboard work, which can both be found on his new disk, "Lyla." He's an ambitious and inclusive player who isn't shy about mixing together Latin, Middle Eastern, and jazz elements. Oct. 7: **Jane Bunnet and the Spirits of Havana.** The Canadian soprano saxophonist and flutist Bunnett has been collaborating with Cuban musicians long before Ry Cooder headed south. Her Latin-jazz fusion has an authentic flavor that often eludes other American practitioners.

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200, ext. 107)—Cabaret performances return to this uptown temple of German art with the German-born actress and singer **Eva Meier** on Oct. 2.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through Oct. 5: **Jason Moran** is his own man, that's for sure. The pianist's muse leads him where it will; he employs tapes in live performances (still unique in jazz) and retools everything from Brahms to Afrika Bambaataa to "Body and Soul." This nervy player

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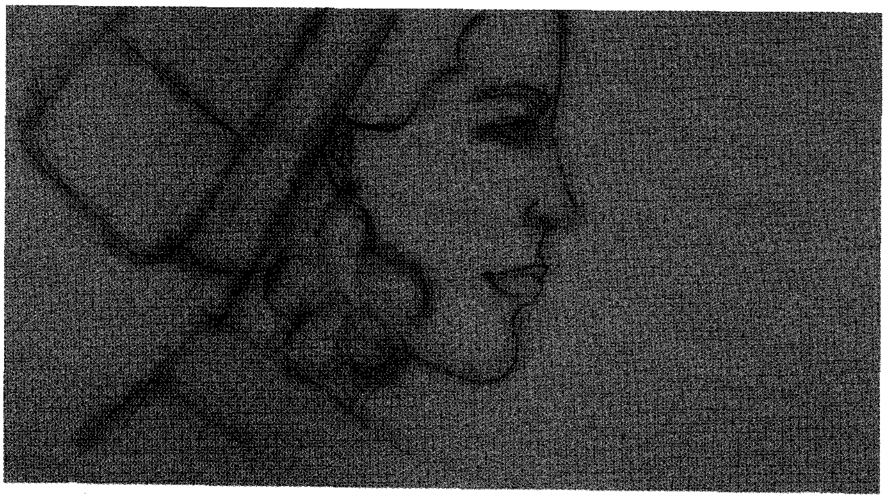
brings his volatile trio with the bassist **Tarus Mateen** and the drummer **Nasheet Waits** back to the Vanguard, where his recently released live disk, "The Bandwagon," was recorded. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—**"Dreams of Yellow Mountain"** is an extensive show of landscape paintings by Chinese artists who remained loyal to the Ming dynasty after it was overthrown by the Manchus, in 1644. Their subject was the landscape around the dynasty's symbolic capital, Nanjing; craggy cliffs dotted with pine trees dominate. The occasional figure is provided more for perspective than as subject matter. One exception is a dazzling hand scroll by Shitao, a panoramic epic depicting sixteen Buddhist saints dwelling in the mountains with various auspicious beasts, including a tiger and a dragon. Another Shitao, this one a hanging scroll, shows a mountain misted in drops of splattered ink, a technique he called elsewhere the "ten thousand ugly ink dots," beating Pollock by a few hundred years. Through Jan. 25. ♦ **"The Responsive Eye"** surveys Native American art from 3000 B.C. forward; the earliest museum endorsements came somewhere in the early nineteen-hundreds, when items began appearing in natural-history and anthropology displays. By the middle of the twentieth century, pieces were making their way into art museums, and curators and collectors like Ralph T. Coe (who was both) took serious interest. Coe amassed the tremendous inventory here, promised to the museum. A surprising amount of it was made for the tourist trade, including a card case, a doll-house chair, and a pair of very pointy little moccasins. Among the pieces that are free of this sort of influence are a pair of headdress frontlets from the Pacific Northwest and several carved masks including an arrestingly long-beaked ceremonial number whose large, caricatured features look like they could have had some influence on the colonizers—their cartoonists in particular. Through Dec. 14. ♦ On May 16, 1703, the six-foot-eight-inch tsar Peter the Great stood in a swamp beside the Neva River and proclaimed it the site for a new city that would take his name and earn the sobriquet "the Venice of the North." For **"Celebrating St. Petersburg,"** the Met raided its collection to mark the tricentennial of imperial Russia's capital city, and the small exhibition is a dazzler, stuffed with German silver, Sèvres porcelain, and snuffboxes encrusted with gold, enamel, ivory, and jewels from the reign of Catherine the Great (1762-96), an era aptly dubbed the "Age of Diamonds." Through Jan. 25. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)



"Ursula in White, 1988," from a show of drawings by Alex Katz, at Blum.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (212-708-9400)—To mark the centenary of the birth of Ansel Adams (1902-84), the museum presents more than a hundred photographs, including some unexpected choices, by the scrupulous Western artist. Through Nov. 3. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—While we wait for the big James Rosenquist show (which opens Oct. 17), the museum offers a mini-retrospective of watercolors by Wassily Kandinsky. Ranging from his early scrambled seascapes to late biomorphic abstractions, the show neatly encapsulates a great, eccentric career. To visitors from Chelsea, Kandinsky's trippy, spin-cycle compositions may suggest links to contemporary talents like Julie Mehretu and Steve Di Benedetto. Through Oct. 22. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—We've seen a lot of him lately, but **"Ellsworth Kelly: Red Green Blue"** is the kind of spare, smart show that can perk up even satiated appetites. Organized by Toby Kamps at the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, the exhibition focusses on a group of eight large paintings made between 1958 and 1965. The continuity of color choices (it's the same red, the same green, the same blue every time) puts the focus on simple changes in scale and shape and offers a kind of Rothko Chapel-like immersion in Kelly's elemental hedonism. There are a few rooms of supplementary material—sketches, prints, and a new canvas in the same palette—but at its heart the show really boils down to just two rooms, three colors, and one sleek vibe. Through Nov. 2. ♦ For sheer joy in materials, no one can compete with Sarah Sze. Binder clips, bright-blue Windex bottles, fake grass, PVC pipe, drinking straws, orange string—put it all together in the Whitney's moatlike sunken courtyard and you've got **"The Triple Point of Water."** This refers to the solid, liquid, and gaseous states of H_2O, and it's an ethereal title, but the elaborate installation is a marvel, a delicate, multilevel habitat, a miniature city or ecosystem animated by little fans and burbling aquariums. Through Oct. 9. (Open Wednesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

ASIA SOCIETY
Park Ave. at 70th St. (212-517-2742)—Before Cai Guo Qiang's explosion project, "Light Cycle," ever illuminated the sky over Central Park, he prepared for the event by sketching images with fire. These diverse drawings (there are five of them here, one to correspond to each stage of the fireworks show) were made by burning gunpowder on enormous sheets of heavy paper; the results look like lunarscapes or burnt petroglyphs. You can watch the process, which required cardboard, stones, artillery noises, and a corps of nimble assistants, on a moni-

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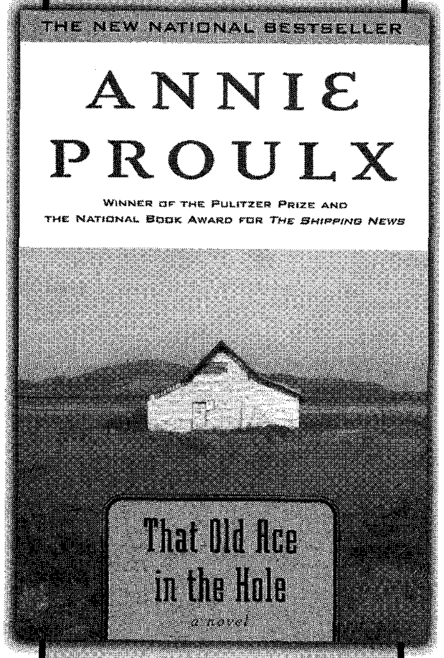
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a novel

tor, but such documentation doesn't explain how he achieved the mysterious and most unfirework-like sense of enduring calm in the drawings. Through Dec. 14. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—Ten years ago, the artists Renata Stih and Frieder Schnock installed eighty street signs in Berlin's Bayerisches Vierte, which was a thriving Jewish neighborhood (Albert Einstein lived there for a time) before the Nazis relocated residents to concentration camps. **"Signs from Berlin"** presents the artists' creations, which paired anti-Semitic ordinances of the Nazi era ("Jews may no longer purchase soap or shaving cream") with simple visual symbols (a straight-edged razor). The work appears in split-screen projection with the original German text on the left and the English translation on the right. Like Claude Lanzmann, the director of the film "Shoah," Stih and Schnock chill the soul not with shocking images but by revealing the barbaric in daily life. Through Jan. 4. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45; Thursdays, 11 to 8; and Fridays, 11 to 3.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

JANE DICKSON
A modest gimmick—painting on AstroTurf—underlies these landscapes of highways, tunnels, bridges, and malls. The AstroTurf softens and blurs forms while also providing a kind of cushioning wryness. But the effect of Dickson's windshield Impressionism is hardly upbeat. The pictures are often quietly beautiful—she captures the crepuscular fluorescence of the Lincoln Tunnel perfectly—but they're also drab and eerie, like a taxi-driver's memories of an interminable night shift. Through Oct. 4. (Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 212-541-4900.)

THERESA CHONG
Chong's new drawings look blandly pretty at first, like nighttime constellations or power grids: it seems to be their secret to invite indifference and then gently hook you. The artist uses a computer to print random distributions of tiny squares onto big sheets of paper. Then she plays connect-the-dots. Sometimes her pencil follows the patterns suggested by the squares themselves. Elsewhere she resists, linking one square to a distant cluster, doubling back, creating little culs-de-sac and neighborhoods. The result is a form of improvised, highly constrained, abstract doodling—and a deft metaphor for the way we turn chance into choice. Through Oct. 11. (Danese, 41 E. 57th St. 212-223-2227.)

RICHARD POUSETTE-DART
As a teen-ager, Pousette-Dart (1916-92) had a formative encounter with Picasso's "Girl Before a Mirror." He absorbed its handlebar curves and heavy paint, mixed them with "Indian Space" inflections, and became, by the time he was twenty, a wunderkind of biomorphism, making eye-popping mythological abstractions that hold their own against anything Rothko or Pollock were doing at the time. This selection, mostly from the late thirties and early forties, showcases Pousette-Dart's precocity and energy, his exuberantly graphic eye. But only once, in "River Metamorphosis," does a kind of euphoric pattern congestion seem to hint at the cosmic-spackle style that later made him a pioneer Abstract Expressionist. Through Nov. 5. (Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 212-794-0550.)

VINCENT SMITH
A sampling of paintings and prints created between 1952 and 1972 shows Smith moving from Jacob Lawrence-style social tableaux to a self-consciously raw, Black Arts aesthetic. Most of the later paintings are ghetto scenes in sulfurous oranges, reds, and blacks. Stricken figures glare from barred windows, while a smiling Porky Pig figure suggests the tyrannical benevolence of the establishment. It all seems pretty overwrought until you get to "The Soul Brothers," a scene of sexual intrigue painted with a sinister, comic, and perhaps uncharacteristic delicacy. Through Oct. 11. (Alexandre, 41 E. 57th St. 212-755-2828.)

CHARMION VON WIEGAND
"Improvisations," the gallery's title for a group of biomorphic abstractions painted in 1945, shows Von Wiegand (1896-1983) in a celebratory mood. Their loopy curves and unmodulated colors are blithely energetic, a sort of loosey-goosey answer to Miró and Stuart Davis. In an effort to set Von Wiegand's giddiness in context, the gallery has put together a delightful selection of modernist paintings and furniture from the forties. Terrific works by Rothko, Calder, Eames, Baziotes, and Wright sit alongside period oddities, including a rabbit-eared wood-panelled 1949 Zenith television, perhaps the ultimate in dated futurism. Through Nov. 1. (Rosenfeld, 24 W. 57th St. 212-247-0082.)

Short List

JUDY PFAFF
Ameringer Yohe, 20 W. 57th St. 212-445-0051. Through Oct. 11.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

ALESSANDRO RAHO
This young British painter produces low-intensity elegance in a series of Alex Katzian portraits of attractive young people and floral still-lifes on large, creamy, monochrome grounds. For his subjects, Raho favors women with mild personalities, rendered full-length in splashily patterned suits. (Kurt Kauper's portraits of imaginary divas come readily to mind.) One fully painted picture

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shows promise: a young woman in casual blouse and skirt, viewed from behind, looks out across water to a hazily wooded shore. There's an unusual piquancy to the work's mixture of intimate, ever so slight mysteriousness and big, breezy scale. Through Oct. 11. (Cheim & Reid, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727.)

Short List

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER
Davis & Langdale, 231 E. 60th St.
212-838-0333. Through Oct. 11.
RICHARD PRINCE
Barbara Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St.
212-206-9300. Through Oct. 18.
JASON RHOADES
Zwirner, 525 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070.
Through Oct. 25.

GALLERIES–SOHO

PAUL KOS
A toy train tunnels through a wheel of cheese, microphones are trained on melting blocks of ice, and a herd of cows demolishes a stack of salt cubes one lick at a time (the latter two pieces are documented in photos and videotape). It all makes for an exceedingly entertaining show. The California conceptualist may lack the name recognition of his peer Bruce Nauman, with whom he shares a fondness for wordplay and integrating sculpture and video, but younger artists have clearly been taking notes (consider Janine Antoni's chocolate lick). Much of the work has a political bent, like the fifteen cuckoo clocks with hammers and sickles dangling from their pendulums, one for every state under Soviet domination during the Cold War. Through Dec. 6. (Grey Art Gallery, 100 Washington Sq. E. 212-998-6780.)

Short List

ELE D'ARTAGNAN
K.S. Art, 73 Leonard St. 212-219-9918.
Through Oct. 9.
ALEX KATZ
Blum, 99 Wooster St. 212-343-0441.
Through Nov. 15.

GALLERIES–QUEENS

"THE PAPER SCULPTURE SHOW"
In 1919 Duchamp mailed his sister a wedding gift: directions for making a sculpture. Now twenty-nine artists invite viewers to make sculptures out of printed instructions provided in the center of the gallery. The results are on display. The gallery resembles a grade-school classroom, with tables piled with such supplies as toothpicks, tape, and rubber cement, and many of the artists play class clown. The ammo for Rachel Harrison's spitball shooters is made by chewing pictures of her sculpture, Nicole Eisenman's witch-hunt lantern requires playing with matches, and Janine Antoni offers an absurdly intricate map for crumpling a piece of paper ("Begin with the 585th fold"). Through Dec. 7. (The Sculpture Center, 44-19 Purves St., Long Island City. 718-361-1750.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

JEFF BROUWS
Something like the German photographer August Sanders' "Man of the Twentieth Century," Brouws' "American Typologies" catalogues a national identity. Instead of using people, though, Brouws uses icons—the work is a series of visual alphabets. Here, signage, houses, trucks, strip malls, farmland, and gas stations, are all unpeopled, richly colored, and arranged in discrete grids. The effect is surprisingly heartening. The individual prints—of an aggressively lavender stucco house, an expectant parking lot, a neon sign reading "Terrible" against a purplish, swirled-ink sky—are beautiful, but one also admires the ambition, sociological inquisitiveness, and organization of the project itself. One of the show's most memorable groupings is a grid of nine photos of street signs and billboards that collectively form a found poem about the commandments and bylaws of American life: "We Have," "Try," "Money," "We Can Help You," and "Temptation." Through Oct. 11. (Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave. 212-989-7600.)

KATY GRANNAN
Diane Arbus once wrote to a friend, "I think it does, a little, hurt to be photographed." In two remarkable shows, Grannan reveals the discomfort wrapped up in the desire to be exposed, as she photographs strangers who replied to ads she placed in newspapers soliciting models. The results are embarrassing and riveting, like overhearing a humiliating secret. The large-scale color pictures at Van Doren are set in public parks; they're stark and sometimes overtly disturbing (a naked man with an erection glares defiantly at the lens, a woman in an orange bikini poses in a mortified hunch). Smaller, black-and-white images at Salon 94, shot indoors, are more lavish and complex. Models lounge against patterned wallpaper in fishnet stockings and satin robes, and here, Grannan's frankness is tinged with a peculiar glamour. Think Walker Evans trying his hand at pinups. (Artemis Greenberg Van Doren, 730 Fifth Ave., 212-445-0444, through Oct. 4; and Salon 94, 12 E. 94th St., 646-672-9212, through Oct. 29.)

REAGAN LOUIE
There are breasts and bare skin aplenty in Louie's clear-eyed, luridly colored photos of sex workers in Asia, but the over-all effect, while certainly provocative, is not titillating. Many of Louie's subjects are photographed not vamping but waiting—for customers, for diversions, for the next day or hour; they have a sort of lazy-lidded stupor that's meant to pass for languor. Together, these pictures could be mistaken for all flesh and flash, but you can feel the photographer struggling, at times, between rage and resignation. Louie is a keen visual composer: in "Couple, Hong Kong," two faceless people are locked in what appears to be the beginning or end of a kiss, though his hand, on her back, appears to be pulling her toward him, while hers, on his shoulder, seems to be pushing him away. With the cheap hotel room and ticky-tacky low-Orientalist décor, could this be anything other than what it appears? The answer seems to be no. Through Oct. 4. (Von Lintel, 555 W. 25th St. 212-242-0599.)

ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE
Curated by the mistress of disguise, Cindy Sherman, this show presents fifty-five pictures by photography's most infamous bad boy. Still-lifes and images of statues, flowers, and, of course, stupendous examples of the male anatomy all mingle in a salon-style hanging. It's a privilege to see so much of Mapplethorpe's work, especially the lesser-known images; the subjects seem more masked than ever, aggressively styled into submission. A hauntingly beautiful Grace Jones, for example, peeks out from under a black hood, her eyes empty and vacant, reflecting the perfect lighting of Mapplethorpe's studio. Ask to see the final image in the show: a portrait of Sherman hanging in the back office. It offers the one vulnerable and unpredictable expression amid all the beautiful emptiness. Through Oct. 18. (Kelly, 528 W. 29th St. 212-239-1181.)

STEPHEN SHORE
These handsome, restrained pictures—all but one of which date from the nineteen-seventies and were taken as part of Shore's "Uncommon Places" series—depict an America both familiar and oddly foreign, not unlike a Hollywood interpretation of the heartland. Documenting the objects and places of various American towns with the wonder and clarity of a foreign visitor not yet acclimated to his new surroundings, the pictures are flooded with incredible, big-sky light. By this point, Shore has spawned so many imitators that his subjects and landscapes—thin-mouthed old people, a chipped mint-green ranch house, an empty highway under a tumbling whorl of cloud—all have the ring of the familiar,

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though Shore's unironic matter-of-factness is distinctly his. Particularly fine is "J.J. Summers Ajency," a Hopperesque picture of a blank storefront, its muted colors soft and velvety. There's nothing harsh or snarky about these pictures—even a TV, on its blond-wood stand, appears dignified. Through Oct. 25. (303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-255-1121.)

JAMES WELLING
Welling's Los Angeles appears to be one giant abandoned construction site, and the pictures—of a blinking, unmanned switchboard, a neglected amusement park—prickle with quiet anxiety. There are color photographs on display, but it's the gorgeously tactile and muted black-and-whites that really convey the city's wan emptiness, such as "Dickson," in which a stacked, cemented shelving unit disappears into dense shadow, and "Apartments, West Los Angeles," showing a stepped, stuccoed slab of apartment buildings, one white bulb struggling to light the night. Through Oct. 4. (Gorney, Bravin + Lee, 534 W. 26th St. 212-352-8372.)

MANABU YAMANAKA
It's difficult to decide how to react to Yamanaka's elegant black-and-white portraits of deformed and diseased people. Yamanaka has photographed his subjects—whom he met in hospitals and institutions across South America, against a white, fashion-shoot-ready backdrop, and for a while, all you see is disfigurement: the smiling child with no ears or hands or feet, his skin flaking off in serrated, filmy sheets; the man with an enormous, misshapen left hand but no right arm at all. But Yamanaka, a Buddhist whose previous shows have explored death and enlightenment, doesn't exploit or romanticize his subjects. Instead, he pulls off the trickiest feat of all: he does them the courtesy of taking them at face value. The result is a surprisingly tender group of photos that challenge you to gaze at them, make it impossible to turn away; they achieve, in the simplest terms, a sort of grace. Through Oct. 11. (Stux, 529 W. 20th St. 212-352-1600.)

Short List

PHILIP-LORCA DI CORCIA
Pace Wildenstein, 543 W. 25th St. 212-929-7000. Through Oct. 11.

SAMUEL FOSSO
Shainman, 513 W. 20th St. 212-645-1701. Through Oct. 4.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
Oct. 1 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: Jewelry. ♦ Oct. 2 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: "Arcade" jewelry, a range of items sold at moderate prices. ♦ Oct. 3 at 10 A.M. and 2: Another "arcade" sale—of furniture, carpets, and decorations—is highlighted by French and English antiques from the New York and Amagansett residences of the late Richard V. Hare, a favorite decorator of the New York-Hamptons set. ♦ Oct. 4 at 10 A.M. and 2: Wine. ♦ Oct. 7 at 10 A.M. and 2: An "arcade" sale of European and American paintings, drawings, and sculpture. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

SWANN
Oct. 2 at 10:30 A.M.: In October of 1925, Josephine Baker, bare to the waist and bedecked with feathers, danced an ecstatic Charleston before an elegantly turned-out crowd at the Théâtre des Champs Élysées; she was a resounding hit, and the "black craze" was born. Nothing captures the energy, brazenness, and style of that moment like the posters of Paul Colin, whose works appear as part of a show of French Art Deco posters from the collection of Jean Chassaing, spanning the years 1925 to 1932. The machine-driven energy of the age is the theme of posters by the great A. M. Cassandre; his theory that "travel is a geometric experience" is demonstrated in striking illustrations of trains, steamships, and (in an advertisement for "Cycles Brillant") a cyclist merging with his bicycle. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Revivals of Jonathan Miller's 1998 production of **"Le Nozze di Figaro"** are always welcome: a traditional but sharp-edged staging, it has a refreshing joie de vivre and lack of pretense. Robin Guarino, who presided over the nimble 2002 revival, returns to direct a cast full of first-timers: Anja Harteros and Dorothea Röschmann make their company débuts as the Countess and Susanna, respectively, while two young Met regulars, Katarina Karnéus and John Relyea, sing the roles of Cherubino and Figaro for the first time in the house. Dwayne Croft is the Count; James Levine conducts. (Oct. 1, Oct. 4, and Oct. 7 at 8.) ♦ **"La Traviata,"** with Renée Fleming, Ramón Vargas, and Dmitri Hvorostovsky; Valery Gergiev. (Oct. 2 at 8.) ♦ Dieter Dorn's spare yet hypnotic production of **"Tristan und Isolde,"** first seen at the Met in 1999, returns with the same impressive cast, including Jane Eaglen, Ben Heppner, Katarina Dalayman, and René Pape; Levine. (Oct. 3 and Oct. 6 at 7.) ♦ The slimmed-down late-seventies stagings of John Dexter remain a testament to a time when the discipline of low budgets could bring big artistic returns. After treating us to rapturous revivals of "Lulu," "Parade," and "Les Dialogues des Carmélites," the house brings back Dexter's singing-dancing triple bill **"Stravinsky"** (comprised of "Le Sacre du Printemps," "Le Rossignol," and "Oedipus Rex"), which will feature, in various roles, the singers Stephanie Blythe, Olga Trifonova, Barry Banks, Rob-

CLASSICAL NOTES

RITES OF PASSAGE
The five intriguing works featured in **"Klezmer Concertos and Encores,"** one of the first compact disks released under the auspices of the Milken Archive of American Jewish Music (a vast project conceived by the philanthropist Lowell Milken and distributed on the Naxos label), reveal a spectrum of responses to the American immigrant experience. Robert Starer's "K'li Zemer" (Hebrew for "instrument of song," which became the Yiddish "klezmer"), a clarinet concerto wonderfully played by David Krakauer and the Barcelona Symphony and conducted by Gerard Schwarz, is a major work of the traditional "melting pot" school. Starer (1924-2001), a prominent American composer who studied in his native Vienna before continuing his education in Palestine and the U.S., was a thoroughly disciplined modernist musician who never lost his soul to the serialist machine; the Jewish elements in the piece emerge proudly and poignantly, always conditioned by economy and taste. In contrast, pieces by two contemporary composers, the ubiquitous Paul Schoenfield ("Klezmer Rondos") and Osvaldo Golijov ("Rocketekya," a winning klezmer-Latin jaunt) sound completely uninhibited. Here, the classical tradition is but a framework for a brash but sophisticated new brand of folk music.

Harry Partch (1901-74), the eccentric son of Presbyterian missionaries, became a wanderer in his own country when he embarked on a hobo freight-train trip from California to Chicago in 1941; the result, **"U.S. Highball"** (Nonesuch), is a journey both to the interior of America and to the interior of his mind. The piece, like all of Partch's music, was composed for his own bizarre collection of homemade instruments with their own system of microtonal tuning, which Ben Johnston's arrangement for the Kronos Quartet (bracingly performed with the actor David Barron reciting Partch's texts) can only suggest. But in recording an album that will introduce thousands of new listeners to Partch's essential language, the Kronos has made a journey worth taking—and the accommodations are first class.

—Russell Platt

SWANN
AUCTIONS

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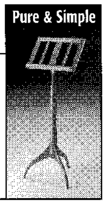

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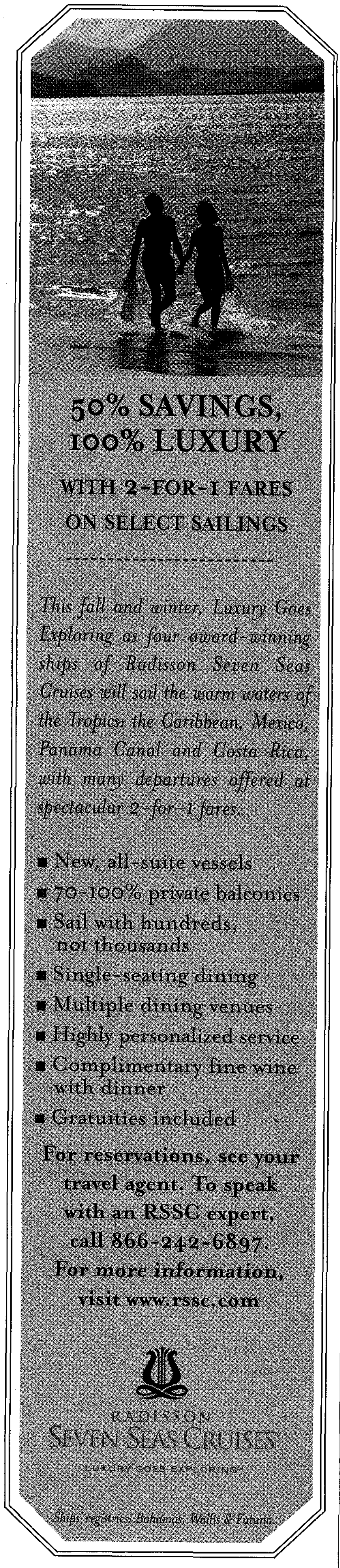
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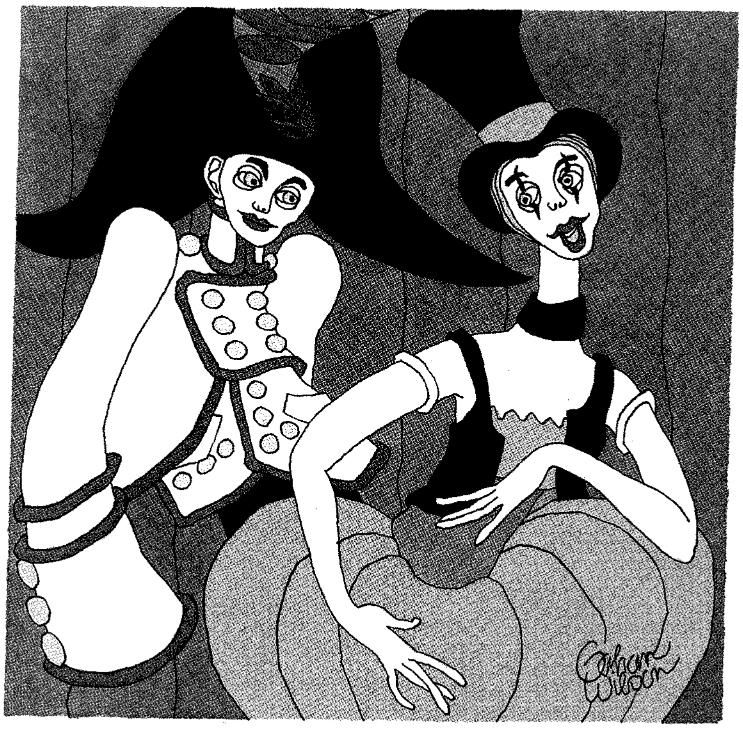
ert Gambill, Evgenij Nikitin, and Eric Halfvarson, the dancers Julie Kent and Damian Woetzel, the actor Philip Bosco, and many others; Gergiev. (Oct. 4 at 1:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA

Perhaps it's the director James Robinson's solid musical background that gives him the talent to turn **"Lucia di Lammermoor"** into ensemble theatre without violating the spirit of Donizetti's score—though we lose the simple sense of spectacle that would have made Jennifer Welch-Babidge's wonderfully adept performance as Lucia into a truly star-making role. Yet this is still a must-see "Lucia," reinforced by the natural Italianate style of Jorge Antonio Pita's Edgardo, the expressive intensity of Stephen Powell's Enrico, and the discipline of George Manahan and his orchestra. (Oct. 1 at 7:30 and Oct. 3 at 8.) ♦ **"Madama Butterfly,"** featuring Chen Sue Panariello, Mika Shigematsu, Brandon Jovanovich, and Michael Corvino; Manahan conducts. (Oct. 2 at 8.) ♦ A new Mark Lamos production of **"La Finta Giardiniera,"** Mozart's early comic masterpiece, featuring Lisa Saffer, Brenda Harris, Sandra Piques Eddy, Brian Anderson, and Matthew Chellis; Manahan. (Oct. 4 at 1:30.) ♦ **"Carmen,"** with Hadar Halevy and Michael Hendrick as Carmen and Don José, Angela Fout as Micaëla, and Kelly Anderson as Escamillo; Steven White. (Oct. 4 at 8.) ♦ Lotfi Mansouri's production of **"The Magic Flute"** returns, sung in English by a cast featuring Jennifer Aylmer, Amanda Pabyan, Tonna Miller, John McVeigh, Dean Anthony, Philip Cutlip, and Gustav Andreassen; Steven Mosteller. (Oct. 5 at 1:30 and Oct. 7 at 7:30.) (New York State Theatre. 212-870-5570.)


New York City Opera presents a new production of Mozart's "La Finta Giardiniera."

GAHAN WILSON

DICAPO OPERA

New York's third professional opera company opens its season with **"Faust and Marguerite,"** an intimate adaptation (by Michael Capasso) of "Faust," Gounod's grand-opera original. (Dicapo Opera Theatre, 184 E. 76th St. 212-288-9438. Oct. 2 at 6, Oct. 3-4 at 8, and Oct. 5 at 4.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

With the Berlioz bicentennial entering its final months, Lorin Maazel gets to add his contributions to that of his formidable colleagues—Levine, Davis, Dutoit—by conducting "Roméo et Juliette." Susanne Mentzer, Matthew Polenzani (the young Met tenor who can sing just about anything, making his Philharmonic début), and José van Dam (amazingly, another début) are the vocal soloists, joined by the New York Choral Artists. (Oct. 2 at 7:30, Oct. 3 at 2, and Oct. 4 at 8.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

CARNEGIE HALL

The hall's hundred-and-thirteenth season kicks off with three concerts by the Kirov Orchestra under the baton of Valery Gergiev. Oct. 1 at 7: A night of showpieces by Wagner, Lalo (the "Symphonie Espagnole," with the violinist Maxim Vengerov), and Rimsky-Korsakov ("Scheherazade"). ♦ Oct. 3 at 8: Two sides of Shostakovich. The 1948 song cycle "From Jewish Folk Poetry," performed here by three singers who appeared in the Kirov's "Eugene Onegin" at the Met this summer (Irina Mataeva, Ekaterina Semenchuk, and Yevgeny Akimov), is haunting and intimate; it is followed by the Symphony No. 7 ("Leningrad"), the last word in heroic bombast. ♦ Oct. 5 at 2: The orchestra plays Prokofiev's complete "Romeo and Juliet." ♦ Oct. 7 at 8: The Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Christoph Eschenbach, takes over with an unusual two-part program that begins with a performance by Swarthmore's Gamelan Semara Santi, an authentic Balinese percussion ensemble—the appetizer for Messiaen's Balinese-influenced "Turangalîla-Symphonie," a luscious, ten-movement, post-Wagnerian epic on love and death, in which the orchestra is joined by the pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet. (212-247-7800.)

MANNES SCHOOL OF MUSIC ORCHESTRA

David Hayes, the assistant conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra, leads the group in a program of Beethoven, Mahler ("Totenfeier"), and Strauss. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5050. Oct. 1 at 8.)

MILLER THEATRE: EOS ORCHESTRA

Peter Lieberson has carved out a niche as a reluctant populist: his works may abound in soft-edged harmonies and plush instrumental colors, but close listening reveals a musician still dedicated to the fiercely intellectual modernist aesthetic in which he was taught (by Milton Babbitt, no less). Lieberson himself (along with Jonathan Sheffer and Ken Selden) conducts the enterprising ensemble in one of Miller's "Composer Portrait" concerts, a program that includes "Free and Easy Wanderer," "Raising the Gaze" (one of many pieces energized by his Buddhist faith), and the Horn Concerto (with Eric Ruske). (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799. Oct. 3 at 8.)

RECITALS

BRENTANO STRING QUARTET
In the inaugural concert of Symphony Space's new rush-hour chamber-music series, the smart and vibrant young quartet plays music by Haydn and Schubert ("Death and the Maiden") in the intimate Thalia Theatre. (Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. Oct. 2 at 6:30.)

BARGEMUSIC
A brace of string-trio programs with the violinist Mark Peskanov, the violist Lev Zhurbin, and the cellist Jakub Omsky. Oct. 2-3 at 7:30: Music by Françaix, Schubert, and Mozart (the Divertimento). ♦ Oct. 4 at 7:30 and Oct. 5 at 4: Beethoven's Three String Trios, Op. 9. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

CHRISTOPHER UNGERER
The young American pianist mixes fare by Haydn and Brahms (the Third Sonata) with more recent works by Akira Miyoshi and Kenneth Leighton (a première). (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Oct. 3 at 8.)

"ON WINGS OF SONG": NATHANIEL WEBSTER
This young American baritone, a standout at Christa Ludwig's Carnegie Hall master classes in 2000, performs his first concert on the Marilyn Horne Foundation's series, offering a program of Schubert, Ives, Duparc, Bowles (the twangy "Blue Mountain Ballads"), and Ivor Novello. (Kosciuszko Foundation, 15 E. 65th St. 212-734-2130. Oct. 5 at 3.)

OUT OF TOWN

LEAF PEEPERS CONCERTS
A splendid pit stop for autumn meanderers in Columbia County is this series of chamber-music evenings, held in a handsomely restored Gothic Revival church whose sanctuary resonates like the insides of a Stradivarius. In the next concert, the distinguished violinist Sanford Allen, whose reserve and depth recall his idol Nathan Milstein, plays three Beethoven sonatas (including the "Kreutzer") with the pianist John Cheek. (St. James Catholic Church, Chatham, N.Y. 518-325-3805. Oct. 4 at 7:30. Through Oct. 18.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS
Oct. 1 at 7: Susan Choi offers passages from her new novel, "American Woman." (Barnes & Noble, Sixth Ave. at 22nd St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Oct. 2 at 7: Breyten Breytenbach, Marie Howe, Sharon Olds, Philip Levine, and other writers turn out to benefit the anti-hunger organization Share Our Strength. (Fales Library, Bobst Library, New York University, 70 Washington Sq. S. For more information, call 212-998-8816.) ♦ Oct. 6 at 7:30: Anselm Berrigan and Tomaz Salamun read from their poetry. (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Oct. 7 at 6: Susanna Moore reads from her novel "One Last Look." (The Corner Bookstore, Madison Ave. at 93rd St. No tickets necessary.)

TALKS
Oct. 1 at 8: The latest installment of the "Little Gray Book" lecture series features Samantha Hunt, Katy Lederer, Brett Martin, and other writers, along with the cartoonist David Rees ("Get Your War On"), holding forth on how to gamble and win. (Galapagos, 70 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn. 718-782-5188.) ♦ Oct. 2 at 7: Elizabeth Alexander interviews her fellow-poet Rita Dove. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. 212-229-5488.) ♦ Oct. 3 at 5:15: The novelist Alice Walker talks about the life and work of Zora Neale Hurston. (LeFrak Gymnasium, Barnard Hall, Barnard College, Broadway at 117th St. For more information, call 212-854-2037.) ♦ Oct. 7 at 8: Sarah Cedar Miller, the official historian for Central Park, talks about Manhattan's back yard. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-425-5500.)

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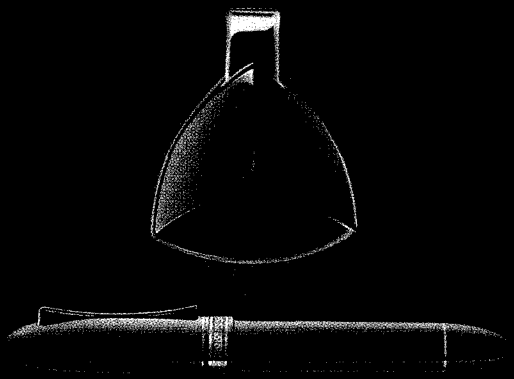
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MOVIES OPENING

BOUNCE KO GALS
A drama set in the underworld of Tokyo's Shibuya district, in which two secondary-school girls pick up a pair of salarymen and take them to a karaoke bar. Masato Harada directed. In Japanese. Opening Oct. 3. (Cinema Village.)

THE EVENT
In a drama directed by Thom Fitzgerald ("The Hanging Garden"), Parker Posey plays a New York D.A. investigating the suicide of a young man in Chelsea. With Olympia Dukakis, Don McKellar, and Sarah Polley. Opening Oct. 3. (Chelsea Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

OUT OF TIME
A thriller about a chief of police (Denzel Washington) in a Florida town who falls under suspicion for a double homicide. With Eva Mendes and Sanaa Lathan. Directed by Carl Franklin. Opening Oct. 3.

SCHOOL OF ROCK
Richard Linklater directed this comedy in which a substitute teacher and frustrated guitarist (Jack Black) organizes his students for a Battle of the Bands contest. With Joan Cusack and Mike White, who also wrote the script. Opening Oct. 3.

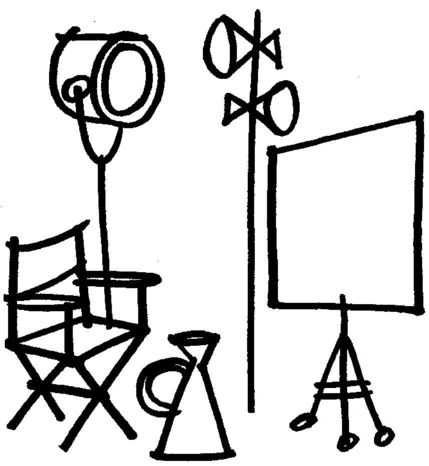
THE STATION AGENT
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Oct. 3. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

WONDERLAND
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Oct. 3. (Lincoln Square and Union Square.)

FILM NOTES

AMERICAN SPLENDOR
Well, it's different. Shari Springer Berman and Robert Pulcini, directing together, have made a drama-documentary in which the drama and the documentary look at each other but don't touch. The movie is about Harvey Pekar, a real and rusted-up gentleman from Cleveland. He works as a filing clerk, and his experiences have long been the subject of a comic strip, illustrated by—among others—Robert Crumb. So we get a good dose of Harvey. But we get an even better and funnier dose of Paul Giamatti, who plays an alternative Harvey, and who is framed, or sometimes drawn, in fond imitation of a comic book—the implication being that even the cruddiest lives can, in sympathetic hands, acquire shape and grace. The story, such as it is, moves from Harvey the record collector to Harvey the cancer sufferer to Harvey the chat-show guest. There is terrific supporting work from Hope Davis as Mrs. Pekar and from Judah Friedlander as Harvey's profoundly unusual friend Toby. Mild fame may have patronized these folks, but the movie pays them a comic homage that feels flattering, fast-witted, and true.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 8/18 & 25/03.) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Sunshine Cinema.)

ANYTHING ELSE
Better than the last two Woody Allen films, but still not very interesting. Falk (Jason Biggs), a young New York comedy writer, is saddled with a couple of draining relationships: his agent (Danny DeVito) doesn't find him much work yet makes him feel horribly guilty, and his girlfriend, Amanda (Christina Ricci), is a hapless liar and narcissist. When he's not fencing miserably with these two, Falk takes long walks in Central Park with Dobel (Allen), another aspiring comedy writer who's as full of advice as Nestor and Polonius combined. The two men natter on, and the camera moves fluently through the park. The rest of the movie, however, feels like a rather nagging play: people barge in and out of Falk's apartment, crowding against each other in a statically photographed set. We keep waiting for some sort of fiction to take hold, or a character to develop, but young Falk is so bland and accommodating that he hardly seems worth putting at the center of a movie, and Ricci's duplicitous Amanda never changes from one lying moment to another.—*David Denby* (9/29/03) (Battery Park 16, Empire 25, First & 62nd Street Cinema, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)



DIRTY PRETTY THINGS
Okwe (Chiwetel Ejiofor), the African-in-exile hero of Stephen Frears's extraordinary London thriller, drives a cab during the day and works as a desk clerk in a good hotel at night; he keeps himself awake by chewing on some sort of African root. Like Travis Bickle, Robert De Niro's overstimulated psycho in "Taxi Driver," Okwe never really sleeps; unlike Bickle, Okwe is a good man, even a fanatically good man. In four or five frantic days, he tries to save another illegal immigrant, Senay (Audrey Tautou), from the clutches of the cheerfully sinister manager of the hotel in which they both work. Señor Juan (Sergi Lopez), as he's known, offers forged passports to illegals in return for a kidney or some other organ that he can sell on the black market. There are a few grisly scenes in the elegant upper rooms of the hotel, but "Dirty Pretty Things" is not a violent thriller. It might be called a social thriller—a tightly knit suspense film that reveals more of the lives of immigrants in London than the most scrupulously earnest documentaries. The great cinematographer Chris Menges keeps the images cool and crisp. There's no murk, no "atmosphere." However harried, Okwe, a great chess player, has to see every move in advance as he defends himself and his friends from the treachery on all sides.—*D.D.* (9/15/03) (Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Sunshine Cinema.)

LE DIVORCE
A Merchant-Ivory movie set in the present, which makes for a change. This one is the tale of two sisters: Isabel (Kate Hudson), who flies to Paris to visit her sister Roxy (Naomi Watts), who has married a dodgy Frenchman. Cue any number of cross-cultural collisions, as our hopeful young Americans—today's Daisy Millers—become ensnared in the oily grasp of old Europe. Isabel finds herself in bed with Edgar (Thierry Lhermitte), who has the decency to look faintly embarrassed about it. The movie contemplates sex, as well as abortion, suicide, and mental instability, but the director, James Ivory, seems fatally undecided as to whether such matters are worthy of solemn consideration or mere backdrops to a bit of fun. The moral of the piece, finally, appears to be "Don't marry out of your tribe," which is nice to know in these days of international suspicion. Wasted actors include Stockard Channing, Sam Waterston, Bebe Neuwirth, Glenn Close, and Matthew Modine; that's a lot of waste. Leslie Caron offers as pure a definition of grande dame as you are likely to find.—*A.L.* (8/18 & 25/03) (Paris.)

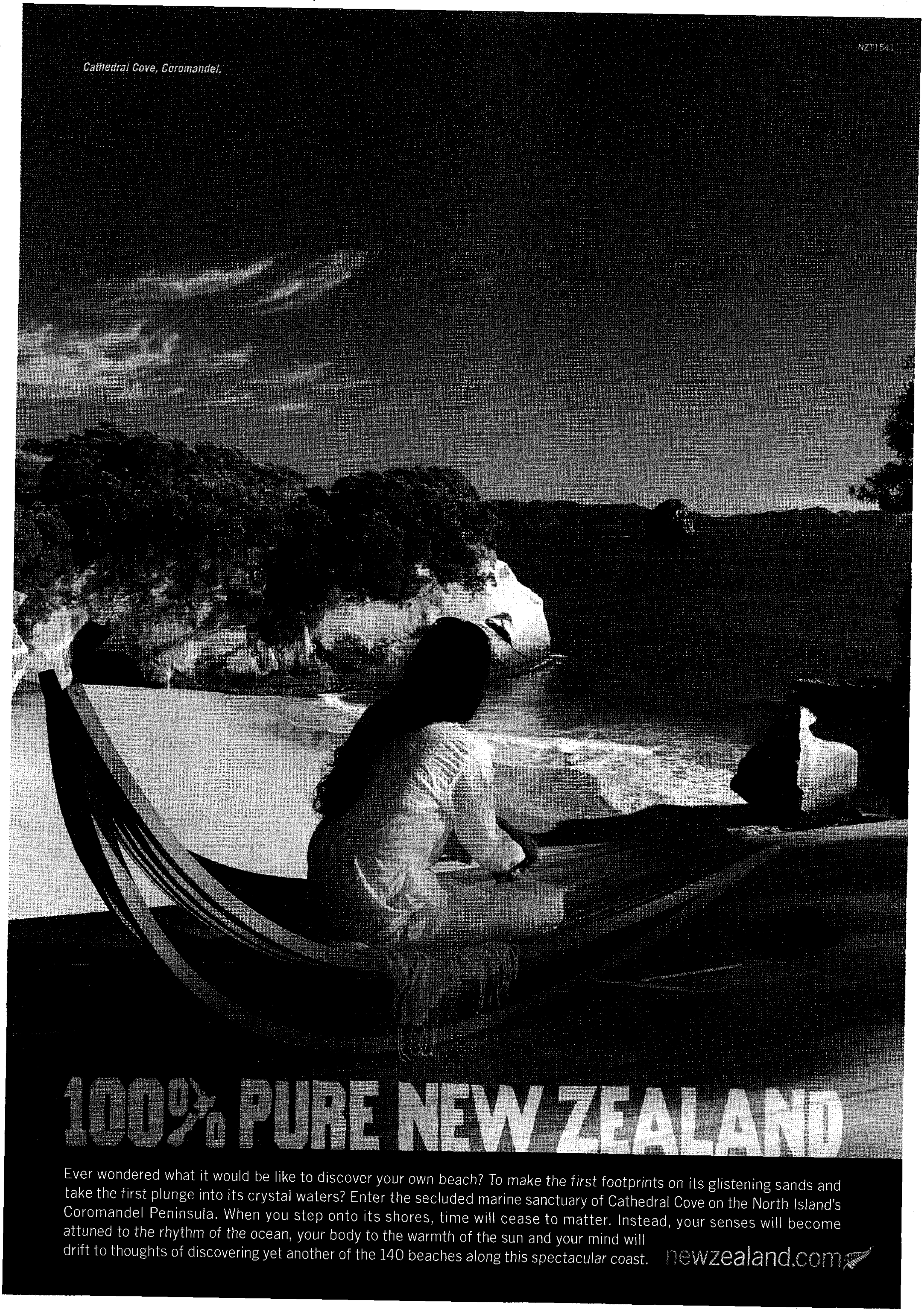
KRAMER VS. KRAMER
In this absorbing yet troubling and one-sided 1979 domestic saga, the breakup of Madison Avenue careerist Ted Kramer (Dustin Hoffman) and his striking wife, Joanna (Meryl Streep), sets the stage for the real drama: their prolonged fight over their six-year-old son, Billy (Justin Henry). Ted discovers both his child and inner child, and becomes a mensch. But Joanna, who abandons them for California, returns and tries to win custody of Billy, spouting feminist slogans and psychotherapeutic cant. She's a shadowy figure at best, and Streep's poignancy doesn't fill the dramatic void. The writer-director Robert Benton does his best work with Hoffman and Henry, who is just as surly and withdrawn, ebullient and touching as his adult co-star. The movie is worth seeing to watch these two interact—and to argue about whether Ted epitomizes healthy fatherhood and Joanna stands for the woman who can't have it all.—*Michael Sragow* (Moving Image; Oct. 5.)

IN THIS WORLD
Is it a documentary? Is it a feature film? No, it's a supersensitive short story, long on pain and patience, from the British director Michael Winterbottom. He starts in a Pakistani refugee camp, picks out an Afghan boy named Jamal, seemingly at random, and tracks him to London. Jamal and an older acquaintance, Enayatullah, are smuggled out by road and boat, for a fat fee, in search of a hopeful life. That sounds plotless, but the movie is weirdly taut and harried, as the two Afghans are tracked through ancient, looming landscapes, treated like cargo by the unscrupulous, and, more rarely, honored as welcome strangers. The result is neither a plea nor a lecture, but afterward you will find it hard to view the travails of mass migration with a cold eye. In Pashto, Farsi, and English.—*A.L.* (9/22/03) (34th Street Theatre.)

LOST IN TRANSLATION
Nothing much happens in the new film by the writer-director Sofia Coppola, but she has first-rate abilities as an observer and as a rueful comedian, and much of the movie is sweetly funny and satisfying. In Tokyo, a burned-out American movie star named Bob Harris (Bill Murray) shows up to appear in a whiskey ad. Stranded in a sleekly pompous modern hotel, he can't connect with anything or even sleep, but he does hook up (chastely) with a very young woman, Charlotte (Scarlett Johansson), whose fashion-photographer husband (Giovanni Ribisi) is rapidly slipping away from her. Both Bob and Charlotte are in emotional limbo, and they become an odd, inappropriate couple. Murray has never been this quiet, this wary, this subtly acid before—or this warm, either. The drama of the movie, such as it is, lies in seeing just how much he will respond and when.—*D.D.* (9/15/03) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE MAGDALENE SISTERS
A scalding picture from Peter Mullan, set in Ireland in the nineteen-sixties. Three girls are sent to a Magdalene Asylum—one of a network of institutions to which wayward young women were consigned by their disapproving families. The asylums were run by Roman Catholic nuns; in this case, the presiding spirit is Sister Bridget (Geraldine McEwan), who counts her money in secret and speaks to her charges with a forked tongue. Finally, the trio of friends—played by Anne-Marie Duff, Dorothy Duffy, and Nora-Jane Noone—make their escape, as if from a prisoner-of-war camp. The system was certainly crushing, but it has inspired Mullan—a fine actor, whose previous film as director, "Orphans," was a scabrous Glaswegian comedy—to deliver his most intemperate work, which lashes out at the Catholic Church with the same hardness of heart that Sister Bridget and her colleagues display in their running of the asylum. You come away from the movie not just convinced but cowed.—*A.L.* (8/11/03) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sutton 1 and 2.)

MATCHSTICK MEN
Nicolas Cage plays a man called Roy, who is both a head case—paranoid, agoraphobic, eaten up by nervous tics—and a smooth professional con artist. How these two sides mesh is never made clear; the director, Ridley Scott, is perhaps too busy making beautiful patterns out of Southern California sun-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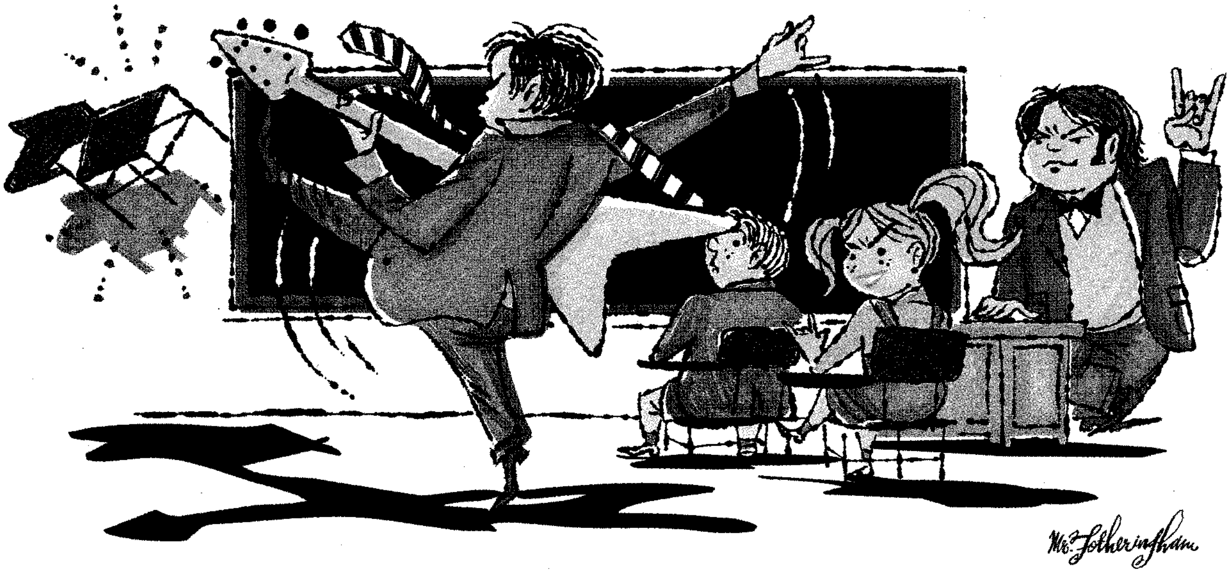
light to notice that his hero doesn't add up. Roy and his partner Frank (Sam Rockwell) rip off the unsuspecting, and the entire movie depends on the extent to which they may or may not choose to practice their skills on each other. The scams feel small, however, beside the big news in Roy's life—the reappearance of his daughter, Angela (Alison Lohman), fourteen years old and as tolerantly disposed toward the world as her father is petrified by it. The film, in fact, belongs to Lohman, who is so easy and unaffected that she makes the surrounding players look like freaks. Scott, normally so adept at leaping from one genre to the next, seems torn between the suspense of the con and the gentler demands of a parental love story; Lohman alone is bold enough not to notice the difference.—*A.L.* (9/22/03) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 2, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

PARTY MONSTER

A superficial and murky tale about the Manhattan party promoter and club-kid king Michael Alig, whose notoriety stems from his participation in the killing of a drug-dealing pal. The co-directors Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato attempt a fevered glimpse of the trippy drug-saturated parties and the fabulous characters who created them, but their film adds up to little more than a series of lacklustre re-creations. And although the clubbing costumes are a hoot Macaulay Culkin, in the lead role, lacks the childish whimsy that made Alig's crime such a disturbing moment in New York night life. Only Seth Green, who plays Alig's mentor, James St. James, provides the narcissistic chirpiness that made club land so exotically self-destructive.—*Bruce Diones* (Angelika Film Center and Chelsea Cinemas.)

TAKING SIDES

After the Second World War, the German conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler (played, though not impersonated, by Stellan Skarsgård) is questioned at length by Steve Arnold (Harvey Keitel), an American major, whose task is to "find him guilty." Furtwängler had stayed in place through the rise and fall of the Nazi regime, leading the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonic Orchestras in concerts that were not just sanctioned but encouraged. Even now, listeners are forced to wonder what role Furtwängler fulfilled for Hitler: lackey, dupe, or cultural front man? In the movie, he defends himself as a subtle resister; the screenwriter, Ronald Harwood, and the director, István Szabó, set up a hot, claustrophobic head-to-head between the accuser and the accused. The result is so conscious of its contribution to the moral debate that it forgets to wake up as a movie, and the shots of a ruined Berlin are a perfunctory joke. Keitel is an annoying presence, but maybe that's the point: Arnold is a brute, a bigot, and a philistine, but, when it comes to the sins of the maestro, he's right.—*A.L.* (9/8/03) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)



Richard Linklater's "School of Rock" opens on October 3, with Jack Black as a rabble-rousing substitute teacher.

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

THIRTEEN

Evan Rachel Wood is Trace, a Los Angeles junior-high-schooler going nuts from being thirteen. Nikki Reed is Evie, the fast, knowing, cat-eyed girl Trace develops a crush on. The two cruise the shops on Melrose Avenue, buying or stealing what they need, and they dress for school like baby whores. This sensational (in both senses) independent feature, directed by the former set designer Catherine Hardwicke and shot by the ace cameraman Elliot Davis, is an emotionally coherent work about incoherent longing—the girls abuse themselves and others and run from one extreme emotion to another. The movie is so absorbing and intelligent that you don't feel repelled by the destructiveness of what they do. With Holly Hunter in a brave performance as Mel, Trace's forty-fiveish mother, who is herself a kind of teen-ager. Nikki Reed poured a lot of her own disasters into the script, which was written in collaboration with Hardwicke.—*D.D.* (9/1/03) (Empire 25, 19th Street East 6, 62nd & Broadway, and Sunshine Cinema.)

TO BE AND TO HAVE

Lean, quick, and devastatingly adroit at the age of fifty-five, the teacher Georges Lopez presides over a one-room schoolhouse in this marvellous documentary shot in the Auvergne region of France. Monsieur Lopez divides the children, ages three to eleven, into three groups, and enforces strict discipline. No one could call his methods progressive; no one could call them ineffective, either. Watching the intensity of his work from moment to moment, child by child, is a demonstration of craft exercised on a level at which skill and love have become indistinguishable. The filmmaker Nicolas Philibert brings the same kind of dedication to his own work. The children are great, unwary camera subjects, and Philibert gives us beautifully composed views of them, granting us enough time to observe each child closely, imagine his circumstances, and see what he does or doesn't learn. The documentary is a deeply satisfying aesthetic and pedagogic experience, though Americans may wonder how such terrific children can become such irritating adults. In French.—*D.D.* (9/29/03) (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

TOKYO STORY

Provincial parents (Chishu Ryu and Chieko Higashiyama) hang on to traditional notions of family while their married children (So Yamamura and Haruko Sugimura) hustle to maintain toeholds in postwar Tokyo. When the parents are stranded there one afternoon without their citified son and daughter, Ryu quips that they're "homeless." The director, Yasujiro Ozu, turns the problem of what to do on family visits—the subject of many a sitcom episode—into a tragic domestic poem. His emotion-charged formalism brings out the beauty in the parents' stoicism and amplifies the surprises that crop up in the archetypal characters, like the despair that emerges from beneath the smile of the couple's loving, widowed daughter-in-law (Setsuko Hara). This director is resolutely unsentimental—he earns every falling tear. Originally released in 1953. In Japanese.—*M.S.* (Walter Reade Theatre; Oct. 5.)

THE TRAIN

John Frankenheimer's elegant, agitating 1965 thriller about a Nazi colonel (Paul Scofield) determined to transport French art treasures to Germany. Led by a railroad inspector named Labiche (Burt Lancaster, in his acrobatic prime), Resistance workers do their best to stall a train filled with "the glory of France"—masterpieces by the likes of Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec—until the Allies can overtake it. Their efforts enrage the Germans, who consider it de rigueur for the railroad to run on time, especially when their enemies are just miles away from liberating Paris. When the French execute a ten-minute delay to accommodate an Allied air raid, it's a daring act of sabotage and a deadpan joke. Every so often, Frankenheimer raises the issue of whether saving paintings is worth losing lives, then tables it. That moral riddle colors the whole surprising saga.—*M.S.* (Film Forum; Oct. 3-4.)

TWENTIETH CENTURY

A first-rate hardboiled farce about theatrical personalities. John Barrymore was a great farceur, and his performance as the egomaniac producer Oscar Jaffe is a roaring caricature of theatrical drive and temperament. It was Carole Lombard's performance as Jaffe's protégée, Lily Garland (née Mildred Plotka), who has become a movie star, that established her as a comedienne. Lombard's talents in this 1934 film are not of the highest, but her spirits are, and in her skintight satins she incarnates the giddy glamour of thirties comedy. Most of the action takes place on the crack train of the title—the Twentieth Century, going from Chicago to New York—which represented the latest thing in speed and luxury. The script, by Hecht and MacArthur, is freely, carelessly irreverent, with affectionate, corny ethnic humor and wisecracks about religion. Howard Hawks directed in a fast, entertaining style, punching up the lines; it's the style he later perfected in "His Girl Friday."—*Pauline Kael* (BAM Rose Cinemas; Oct. 1.)

UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN

A soft-core renovation fantasy for educated women. Frances (Diane Lane), a San Francisco writer and teacher dumped by her adulterous husband, goes on a bus tour of Tuscany and falls in love with a

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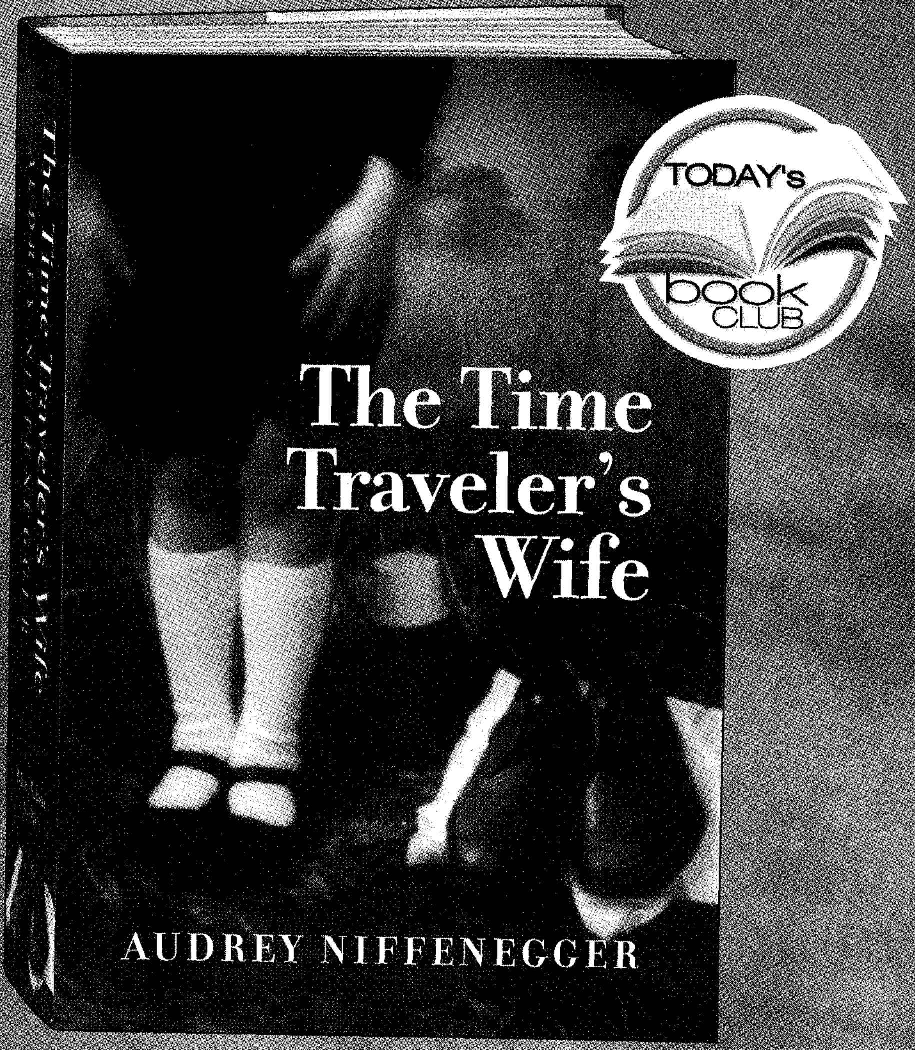
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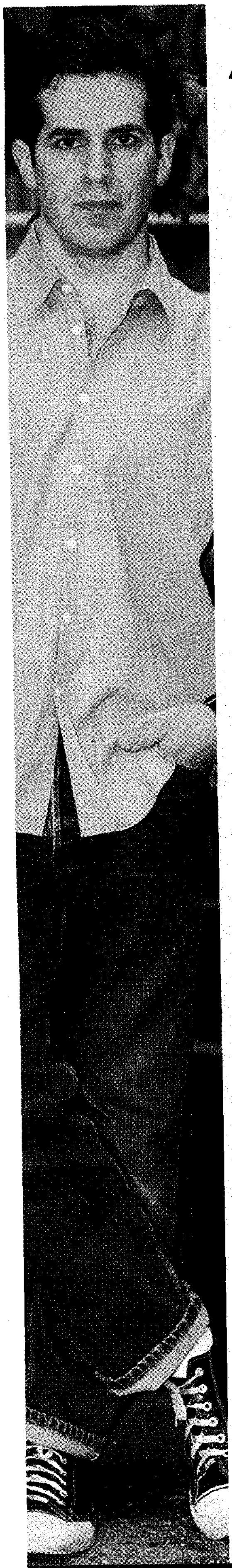

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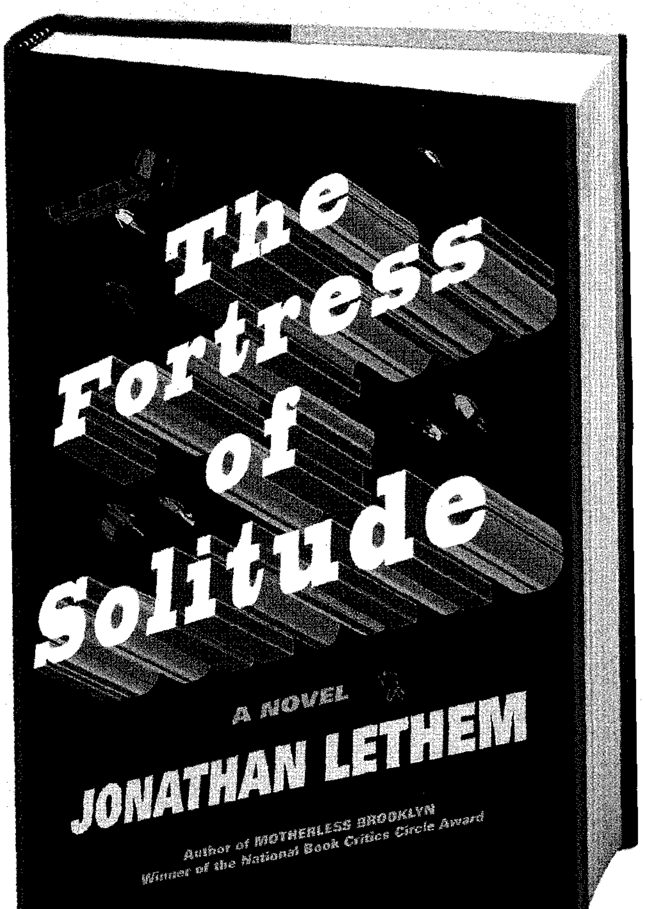
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crumbling old villa. After many blissfully undramatic episodes—an ancient wall falls down, a toilet mysteriously emits boiling water—the house gets scraped, plastered, painted, and gardened back into shape. It's Frances's life, of course, that really needs work. Luckily, in Rome, she finds Marcello (Raoul Bova)—yard-wide shoulders, blue eyes, all of Italian manhood in a white suit—and drives off with him in his Alfa Romeo convertible. There's a lot more of this sort of harmless, pleasant, inconsequential stuff, with much of it redeemed by the good humor of the writer-director Audrey Wells, who serves up clichés and makes fun of them at the same time. With Sandra Oh as a sharp-tongued Bay Area lesbian friend of Frances's who arrives in Tuscany to have a baby.—*D.D.* (9/29/03) (Battery Park 16, Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.)

ALSO PLAYING

BUBBA HO-TEP
Angelika Film Center.
CASA DE LOS BABYS
Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Union Square.
DUPLEX
Battery Park 16, Cinema 1, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.
MY LIFE WITHOUT ME
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.
THE RUNDOWN
Astor Plaza, Battery Park 16, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.
SOUTHLANDER
Cinema Village.
UNDERWORLD
Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.

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Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

EVERETT COLLECTION

CHINA DOLL *The gorgeous Anna May Wong, raised in a Chinese laundry in Los Angeles, made it big in Europe in the late twenties. In E. A. Dupont's "Piccadilly" (New York Film Festival, October 4), a silent from 1929, she plays a scullery maid who becomes the star dancer of a posh London night club, only to be strangled for her presumption by her old boyfriend. Her floor-show début is the would-be hot number, temple-shaped hat and all. Far better is the hand-on-the-belly shimmy that she does in the night-club kitchen before she is discovered.—Joan Acocella*

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Oct. 12: A Robert Benton retrospective. Oct. 4 at 2: "Bonnie and Clyde" (1967, Arthur Penn; written by Benton and David Newman). ♦ Oct. 4 at 4:30: "Bad Company" (1972). ♦ Oct. 5 at 2: "The Late Show" (1977). ♦ Oct. 5 at 4: "Kramer vs. Kramer" (†). ♦ Repertory nights. Oct. 4-5 at 6:30: "Day for Night" (1973, François Truffaut; in French).
BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—Oct. 1 at 4:30 and 9:10: "Twentieth Century" (†). ♦ Through Oct. 9: "Paul Morrissey: An Independent Spirit." Oct. 2 at 7:30: "Women in Revolt" (1972). ♦ Oct. 3 at 5 and 8: "Flesh" (1968). ♦ Oct. 4 at 5 and 8: "Trash" (1970). ♦ Oct. 5 at 5 and 8: "Heat" (1972). ♦ Oct. 6 at 7:30: "Lonesome Cowboys" (1968). ♦ Oct. 7 at 7:30: "Spike of Bensonhurst" (1981).
FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Through Oct. 9: A John Frankenheimer retrospective. Oct. 1 at 1, 4:30, and 8: "Grand Prix" (1966). ♦ Oct. 2 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, and 9:40: "The Gypsy Moths" (1969). ♦ Oct. 3-4 at 1, 3:30, 7, and 9:30: "The Train" (†). ♦ Oct. 5-6 at 1:30, 4, 6:30, and 9: "Seven Days in May" (1964). ♦ Oct. 7 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, and 9:40: "The Horsemen" (1971).
FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—The films of the actress Jane Birkin. Oct. 7 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Keep Up Your Right" (1987, Jean-Luc Godard; in French).
GRAMERCY THEATRE
127 E. 23rd St. (212-777-4900)—Through Oct. 13: "Dark Lover: Screening Rudolph Valentino." Oct. 2 at 2: "The Sheik" (1921, George Melford). ♦ Oct. 2 at 4: "Blood and Sand" (1922, Fred Niblo). ♦ Oct. 2 at 6: "The Shriek of Araby" (1923, F. Richard Jones) and "The Wonderful Chance" (1920, George Archainbaud). ♦ Through Oct. 5: "Heddy Honigmann: Direct Address." Oct. 3 at 2: "Good Husband, Dear Son" (2001; in Serbo-Croatian). ♦ Oct. 3 at 3:30 and Oct. 5 at 4:45: "Mind Shadows" (1988; in English and Dutch). ♦ Oct. 4 at 6: "The Underground Orchestra" (1997; in French and Spanish). ♦ Oct. 4 at 8:15: "Private" (2000; in Dutch). ♦ Oct. 5 at 7: "Crazy" (1999; in Dutch and Serbian). ♦ Through Oct. 17: "John Mills: Forever English." Oct. 3 at 6: "Great Expectations" (1946, David Lean). ♦ Oct. 3 at 8:15: "Ryan's Daughter" (1970, Lean). ♦ Oct. 4 at 1: "The History of Mr. Polly" (1949, Anthony Pelissier). ♦ Oct. 4 at 4: "The Colditz Story" (1955, Guy Hamilton). ♦ Oct. 5 at 2: "Oh! What a Lovely War" (1969, Richard Attenborough).
THE NEW YORK FILM FESTIVAL
Lincoln Center (212-875-5050)—Through Oct. 19: The forty-first year of the festival; most screenings take place at Alice Tully Hall. Oct. 3 at 8: "Mystic River" (2003, Clint Eastwood). ♦ Oct. 4 at 5:30 and Oct. 5 at 8:30: "A Thousand Months" (2003, Faouzi Bensaïdi; in French). ♦ Oct. 4 at 8:30 and Oct. 5 at 4:30: "Dogville" (2003, Lars Von Trier). ♦ Oct. 5 at 1:30: "S21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine" (2003, Rithy Panh). ♦ Oct. 6 at 6 and Oct. 7 at 9:15: "Mansion by the Lake" (2003, Lester James Peries). ♦ Oct. 6 at 9:15 and Oct. 7 at 6: "Pornography" (2003, Jan Jakub Kolski; in Polish). ♦ Special event. Oct. 4 at 2: The composer Neil Brand has written a new score for the silent film "Piccadilly" (1929, E. A. Dupont), which will be performed by a seven-piece ensemble.
SUNSHINE CINEMA
139-143 E. Houston St. (212-358-0573)—Midnight movies. Oct. 3-4: "LadyHawke" (1985, Richard Donner).
WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Oct. 1-3: "Horowitz Plays 100," a tribute to the Russian pianist. Oct. 2 at 6:30 and Oct. 3 at 7: "Vladimir Horowitz, a Reminiscence" (1993, Pat Jaffe and Bob Eisenhardt). ♦ Oct. 1 at 8:30 and Oct. 3 at 4: "Horowitz Plays Mozart" (1987, Albert Maysles, Susan Froemke, and Charlotte Zwerin). ♦ Oct. 2 at 8 and Oct. 3 at 1:45: "Horowitz in Moscow" (1986, Brian Large). ♦ Oct. 1 at 6:30 and Oct. 3 at 5:15: "Vladimir Horowitz: The Last Romantic" (1986, Maysles et al.). ♦ Through Nov. 5: "Yasujiro Ozu: A Centennial Celebration." All films are in Japanese. Oct. 4 at 1:30 and Oct. 6 at 7:45: "The Only Son" (1936). ♦ Oct. 4 at 3:45: "Late Spring" (1949). ♦ Oct. 5 at noon: "I Was Born, But" (1932). ♦ Oct. 5 at 2: "Tokyo Story" (†). ♦ Oct. 5 at 4:45: "Good Morning" (1959). ♦ Oct. 5 at 6:45: "Late Autumn" (1960). ♦ Oct. 5 at 9:15: "An Autumn Afternoon" (1962). ♦ Oct. 6 at 6 and 9:45: "What Did the Lady Forget?" (1937). ♦ Oct. 7 at 2 and 6:30: "Days of Youth" (1929). ♦ Oct. 7 at 4:30 and 9:15: "I Graduated, But" (1929). ♦ Special event. Oct. 4 at midnight: "The Kids Are Alright" (1979, Jeff Stein).

Steve Galbraith, Morgan Stanley Chief Investment Officer

Searching for financial walks & stolen bases.

Michael Lewis' latest book, *Moneyball*, is all about finding value where the consensus does not. The book revolves around the unlikely success of the Oakland A's, who, in finance terms, consistently outperform the market with players (stocks) that other teams (investors) deem rejects. The A's managers found that convention tended to overrate such sexy achievements as stolen bases and batting averages while underestimating the importance of on-base percentages and walks. Which led us to wonder: What are the financial equivalents of a stolen base and a walk?

Growth rates — the financial equivalents of a .280 hitter with a .290 on-base percentage. The A's found that "bad" body types can still be terrific players, and vice versa. Too often scouts predetermine that the 6'3" beefcake boy will outperform the dumpy 5'8" guy. The financial equivalents of the 6'3" stud who can't hit a curve ball are "growth" factors like historical and forecast growth rates. If one were systematically to buy the quintile of stocks offering the fastest historical or projected growth while shorting those providing the least, an investor would systematically underperform the market by some 500 basis points per annum.

Say No to Mo'. What's an even more obvious way of underperforming? How about buying a stock that has just gone up a lot. Buying yesterday's winners is akin to being caught stealing a base. If one were to systematically go long the quintile of stocks with the best performance over the prior month while going short the quintile with the worst, one would systematically lose a lot of money.

The walk equivalent. The most prominent characteristic the A's look for in players is the ability to draw walks. Walks are highly valued both for what they are not (i.e., outs), and what they are (an active use of the opposing pitcher's arm, and a place on the bases). Walks = success. But walks are boring. Walks do not elicit oohs. As such, walks are grossly undervalued. In the stock market, we have endured an era where investors chased the oohs and aahs, overlooking boring old valuation. Over the long haul, the most important factors in adding alpha to portfolios are valuation oriented. Price to earnings, price to sales and even price to book are the financial equivalents of walks. If one were to buy systematically the cheapest quintile of stocks on these metrics while selling short the dearest, one might enjoy an early retirement.

Sizzle is vastly overrated. Just as being a Red Sox fan prepares one much better for the realities of life than being a Yankees fan, understanding the nuances of baseball can help you understand investing. In an era characterized by corked bats and corked financial statements, give us the steak, not the sizzle, give us walks, give us cheap stocks.

Steve Galbraith
Chief Investment Officer

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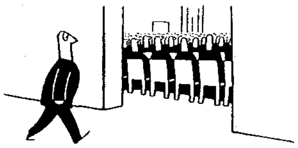
This is an edited excerpt from "Searching for the Financial Equivalent of a Walk," by Steve Galbraith, dated 8/5/03. For a copy of the full article, including important information and disclosures regarding Morgan Stanley, please see www.morganstanley.com/ourviews or contact 1-800-962-1343. This article does not provide individually tailored investment advice and has been prepared without regard to the individual financial circumstances and objectives of persons who receive it. It was based on public information, and Morgan Stanley makes no representation that it is accurate or complete. Estimates of future performance are based on assumptions that may not be realized. Investments and services offered through Morgan Stanley & Co. Incorporated and Morgan Stanley DW Inc., members SIPC. Morgan Stanley and One Client At A Time are service marks of Morgan Stanley. © 2003 Morgan Stanley.

THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
SOLO ACT

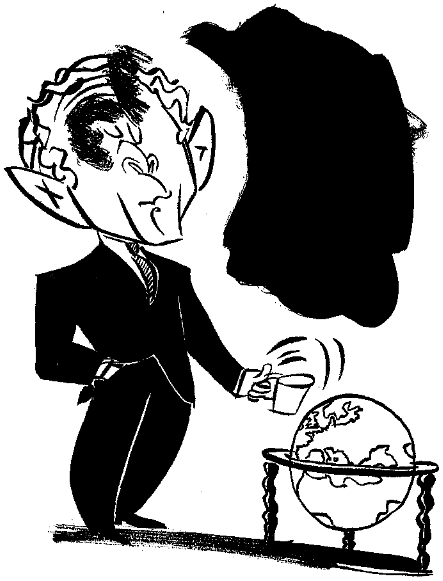


Last week, President Bush came to New York to make his case—if one can call it that—for international coöperation. At the opening of the annual meeting of the United Nations' General Assembly, Bush spoke of the need for countries to combat collectively global problems such as AIDS, weapons proliferation, and the sex trade. He also called on "all nations of good will" to come to the aid of Iraq, observing that "every young democracy needs the help of friends." The President suggested that a useful role for the U.N. in the ravaged nation might be "training civil servants," having told Fox News the day before that perhaps the international organization could help draft a constitution for Iraq: "I mean, they're good at that." The response to the speech from General Assembly delegates was variously described in news accounts as "tepid," "perfunctory," and "chilly."

So far, at least, Bush's call for global collaboration has not been answered. The Administration wants America's allies to commit more than fifteen thousand new troops to Iraq, but after two days of meetings last week with, among others, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder of Germany and President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan, the President emerged with nothing in the way of actual commitments. To make up the difference, the Pentagon may soon activate more National Guard and Reserve units. "Since it doesn't look like we'll have a coalition brigade, we have no choice but to plan for American forces," General John Abizaid, the head of the United States Central Command, said. Bush's efforts to secure monetary support have been similarly rebuffed. At a meeting scheduled for late October in Madrid, more than fifty "donor nations" are expected to pledge a grand total of perhaps two billion dollars in aid to Iraq—less than the cost of one month's occupation and a fraction of what the Administration was seeking.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

It is hardly surprising, at this late date, that the President should find himself going it alone. The eighty-seven billion dollars that Bush recently requested from Congress to fund operations in Iraq and Afghanistan will, if approved, be equivalent to roughly twenty per cent of total non-defense discretionary government spending for the year. Security in Iraq nevertheless remains inadequate; more U.S. troops (a hundred and sixty-eight) have been killed since Bush declared major combat operations to be over, on May 1st, than were slain during the invasion (a hundred and thirty-eight). Just the other day, reacting to the ongoing violence and to the bombings that have killed twenty-two U.N. workers in Baghdad, Secretary-General Kofi Annan ordered the organization's already skeletal staff in the city to be further reduced. Meanwhile, Bush's approval ratings are the lowest of his Presidency, and Democrats have been emboldened to issue more and more strident denunciations. "The President of the United States asked the Congress to put up eighty-seven billion dollars to cover for his failed policy in Iraq," Representative Nancy Pelosi, the House Democratic leader, declared after Bush spoke to the U.N.



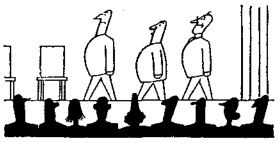
Under such circumstances, committing capital—either financial or human—obviously has a limited appeal for foreign leaders. But, even beyond the proverbial sinking-ship phenomenon, the President is suffering for having been wrong. Bush justified the war on the premise that Iraq was stockpiling weapons of mass destruction, and he overruled the objections of the international community by insisting that the moral imperatives of the situation were clear. According to David Kay, who has been leading the American search, no W.M.D.s have yet been found, and, in spite of the genuine accomplishments of the war, conditions on the ground have not borne out the President's certitude. In fact, Bush has been compelled to seek international assistance because of the very complexities that the international community had warned about, an awkward state of affairs that he still can't—or won't—acknowledge.

"Events during the past two years have set before us the clearest of divides," the President told the General Assembly, "between those who seek order and those who spread chaos; between those who work for peaceful change and those who adopt the methods of gangsters; between those who honor the rights of man and those who deliberately take the lives of men and women and children, without mercy or shame." Addressing the same group later in the day, President Jacques Chirac of France suggested, with characteristic French irony, that, in his opinion, the United States was spreading chaos: "We are using force to combat terrorism, but that is not enough. It will return over and over if we allow extremism and fanaticism to flourish, if we fail to realize that it uses the world's unresolved conflicts and imbalances as its justification." Chirac's speech, in contrast to Bush's, was warmly received by the delegates.

Bush has always portrayed the U.N.'s slowness to pursue Saddam Hussein as a failure of the institution; constrained by anxieties, protocol, and self-doubt, it is unable to take action, even against barbarism. He went into Iraq without the law behind him, because that was the only way, in his mind, to reëstablish the law. In this sense, he really did take on the role of *le cowboy*, for which he has been so roundly derided in the European press. By the end of the Western, the town has been rid of its villains, but by dint of a kind of violence that it can't then accommodate. As the hero rides off into the sunset, he is almost always a solitary figure. With his speech last week, the President effectively recommitted himself—and, with him, the country—to this course.

—*Elizabeth Kolbert*

THE STUMP
PACE YOURSELF



For those not lucky enough to have tickets to last Thursday's Democratic debate at Pace University, downtown, the place to be was not the so-called spin room—a gigantic basement gymnasium hastily equipped to accommodate four hundred media reps bent on seeing Wesley Clark's début. It was the Eddie Layton Student Union, one floor above, where about two hundred college and high-school students had gathered for a special meeting of the poli-sci class "Road to the White House," led by Professors Christopher Malone and George Martinez.

The televisions were big, the lights pleasantly dimmed, and the free food (hoagies, pasta salad, couscous) vastly superior. The students, many of them potential voters, presented the opportunity for an on-site focus group and—being young, impressionable, and habitually less cynical than the press gaggle downstairs—a more receptive audience for unannounced visits from the candidates.

Sure enough, forty-five minutes before the debate began, John Kerry came bounding in. He performed his standard group greeting—right hook morphing into outstretched wave. "We are going to talk today about how we put America back to work," he said. "This guy down in the White House, George Bush, is taking America in a radically wrong direction." Kerry spoke for ten minutes, about Bush's United Nations appearance (which displayed "an extraordinary, continued level of arrogance"), his own campaign promise to eradicate usable nukes from the American arsenal, and the need to reclaim "patriotism" from the likes of Donald Rumsfeld and Tom DeLay.

Professor Martinez took a quick pregame survey, and determined that the class was more or less equally familiar with John Edwards and Jay-Z. During the debate, Al Sharpton's good-natured quips ("I'm a different Al than you hung out with before, Joe, but I'm going to win") got the best response from the room. Dennis Kucinich's Keebler-elf visage brought chuckles at first, but as Howard Dean and Dick Gephardt traded accusations the students mostly kept their thoughts to themselves.

At six o'clock, when the debate was over, Martinez and Malone conducted a straw poll. Sharpton, owing perhaps to home-town favoritism, came out on top, with Clark edging Dean for second, and Kerry and Edwards rounding out the top five. Bob Graham received no votes. A discussion ensued. "I think that we would have liked to have heard some issues that were a little more pertinent to our demographic," one young man said. "But, at the same time, the economy is a little more important than drug laws and other things—lowering the drinking age, stuff like that. . . . Um, go Howard Dean!"

Before long, the winner himself arrived, gliding forward with an imperial smile. "The good news is that people are catching on, people are gravitating," Sharpton said. He identified his cheering fans as members of the "hip-hop generation," who, he said, will be the swing voters in 2004.

"I just got a call from the Clark campaign," Professor Malone reported, after Sharpton left. "General Clark is going to come down in seven minutes." It was half past six. Moments later, a wide-eyed, blinking Bob Graham ambled in, flanked by his wife, Adele, and one of his daughters. "I enjoyed having a chance to talk with some of your fellow-students," Graham said. "How many here know Beatriz Lopez?" Smattering of acknowledgment. "Well, she is an outstanding person, and happens to have graduated from the same high school that I did, Miami Senior High School. So please recognize her innate wisdom." Brief pause. "That was supposed to be a joke."

Adele Graham took the microphone. "This is not a time to be electing someone who has not had foreign-policy experience," she said, almost scolding. "So I say, when you start thinking about your candidates, think about a person who is very, very qualified, who's been a governor of a very big state, who knows what he's doing." This, oddly, may have been the most direct attack on Clark all day.

Joe Lieberman stopped by soon afterward, waving feverishly as he entered. "I hope the Democratic Party looked good this afternoon," he said. "But I'll tell you

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what *did* look good—Pace University.” He noted some of the virtues of public service, then added, “My wife said to me a while ago that running for President is very big and very small at the same time. Uh, sometimes I have to ask my wife to clarify exactly what she means—but she was right.”

Dennis Kucinich, full of nervous energy, came next. He insisted that he was the “only” candidate truly speaking with the interests of all of the American people at heart. Then, in response to a question about his diet, he said, “I've been a vegan for nine years. And listen up close: I made the decision out of love. I met someone who was a vegan. It was part of the courting process. You can't make this stuff up.”

As Kucinich walked out, Professor Martinez shouted, “All the vegans say ‘Yee-eah.’ ”

“Yee-eah!”

“Say ‘No meat!’ ”

It was a few minutes to seven. “Is General Clark out there?” Professor Malone asked, looking toward the hallway. The General had already left the building.

—Ben McGrath

SHOWTIME

LAWYER WALKS INTO A BAR

The *New Jersey Law Journal*, one of America's oldest legal newspapers, published its first issue in 1878, with the following boast: “But if our State is a small part of the nation, she has a judiciary known and honored abroad, and at her Bar are practising men whose legal acumen is not one whit behind that of leading lawyers in other States of the Union.” A hundred and twenty-five years later, despite the concentration of high-powered firms across the Hudson, New Jersey still has some talented lawyers—or, rather, “multitalented lawyers,” according to Robert Steinbaum, the *Law Journal's* publisher.

William Hyland, for example. Not only was he the state's attorney general, in the seventies; he also played Carnegie Hall as part of a Benny Goodman tribute—using one of Goodman's clarinets. (Hyland was Goodman's lawyer, and an executor of his estate.) Or Cissy Rebich, who abandoned a career on Broadway (“Les Mis,” “Mame”) to become a Morris County prosecutor. Both Hyland and Rebich were among the attorney-stars who were assembled by Steinbaum to perform at the *Journal's* glitzy birthday revue, “A Celebration of Lawyers in the Arts,” held the other day at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, in Newark.

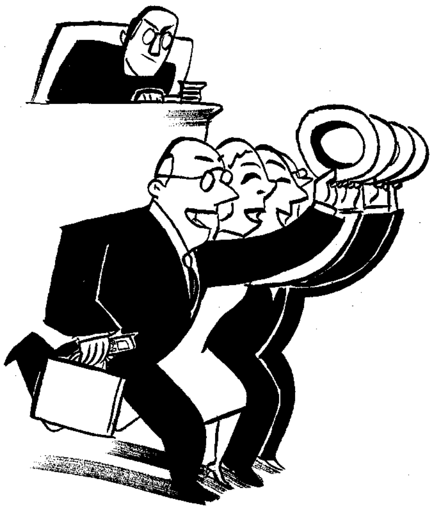
“I confess, I am a New Jersey lawyer,” Scott Sheldon, the show's director, and an antitrust specialist, said from the stage, addressing about five hundred dressed-up Honorables and Esquires. “And I'm proud of it. Now, just think, how many hundreds of lost unbillable hours are we burning tonight?” And so began an evening of lawyer jokes—or lawyers' jokes.

The former governor (and judge) Brendan Byrne, who may be better remembered in these parts for the sporting arena that no longer bears his name, delivered a brief introductory standup routine (“So as I was saying, I've been around a long time. I remember Preparation A”), and then it was showtime. Courting Disaster, a barbershop quartet led by the Honorable John W. Bissell, chief judge of the U.S. District Court for New Jersey, took the stage and performed a musical skit involving a personal-injury dispute. (The highlight: Judge Bissell's ad-libbed rendering of Elvis's “Love Me Tender” between verses of the a-cappella standard “Aura Lee,” in which he used a golf club for a microphone.)

More than an hour of basic lawyer-talent-show fare followed: a Beethoven piano sonata performed by a general practitioner in Toms River; spirituals sung by a former federal prosecutor in Newark; “The Girl from Ipanema,” featuring William Hyland on clarinet and his brother Richard, a former Superior Court judge, on sax; electric blues-rock numbers fronted by a pair of entertainment lawyers from Roseland and Secaucus.

The multitalented-lawyer award no doubt belonged to Deborah Fennelly, of Legal Services in Edison. She belted out two solos (“Make the Man Love Me” and “To Keep My Love Alive”) before shedding her red dress and donning a light-blue leotard for the evening's most unusual performance—a six-attorney interpretative dance to the movements of Justice, Mercy, and Grace. (Full disclosure: the choreographer never attended law school.) The lawyers danced alternately in pairs and in a circle. There were articulated poses, a curious miming routine that suggested the filing of documents, and series of vaguely synchronized pirouettes marred by imprecise spotting.

New Jersey's “funniest lawyer,” Jon Bramnick, so voted three years in a row by the Essex County Bar, also made an appearance. “You have to feel a little sorry for me,” he said. “I'm a plaintiffs' personal-injury lawyer, and I'm also in the Republican caucus.” Like any experienced comedian, he wove current events into his act—making a reference, for instance, to the recent rash of bear spottings in Sussex County. “Everybody's on the Atkins diet these days,” he said. “I don't get it. You know the Atkins diet don't work because there's fat bears—and ain't no pasta in the woods.”



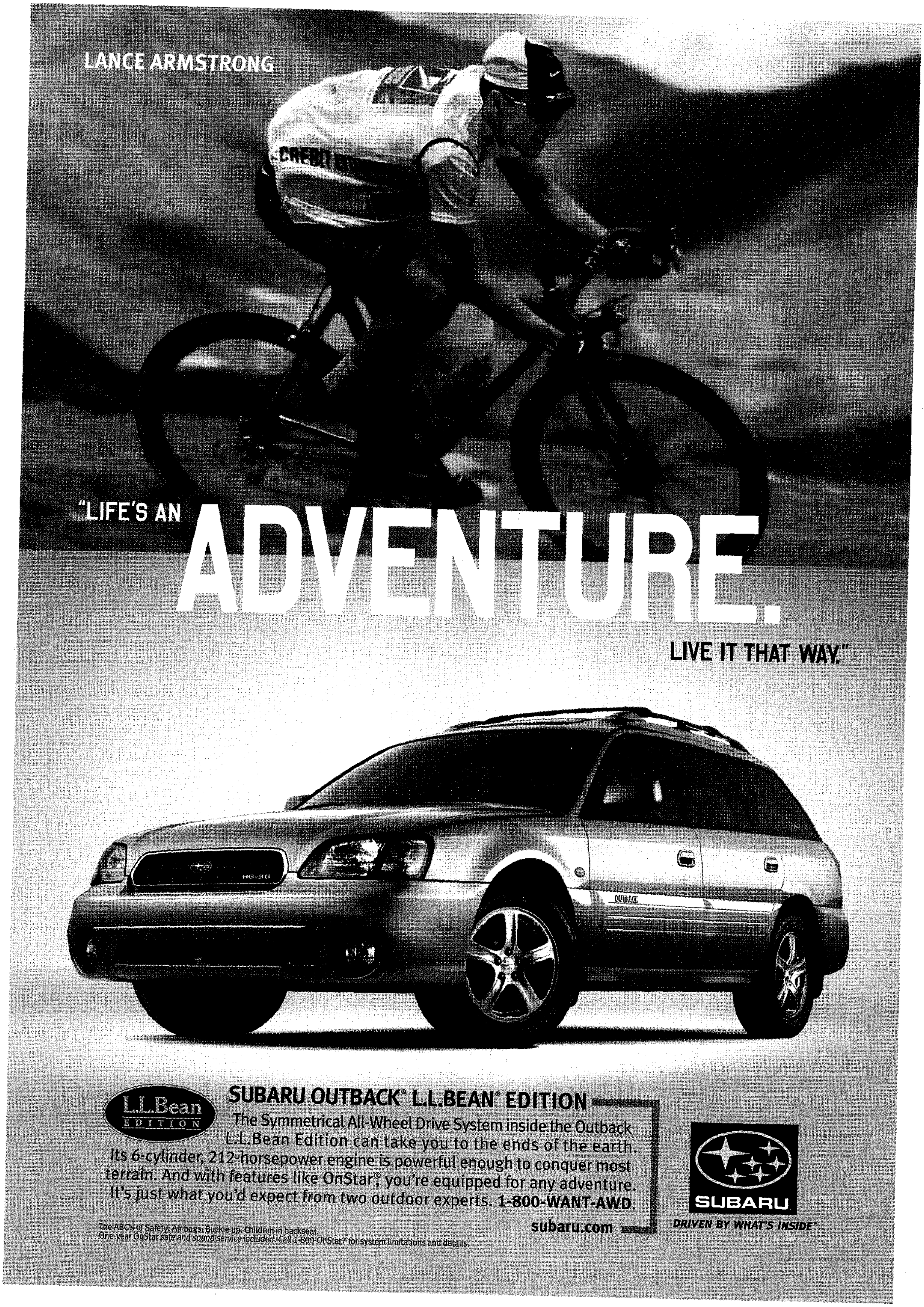
New Jersey lawyers

—Ben McGrath

POSTSCRIPT

GEORGE PLIMPTON

A few weeks before entering the ring at Stillman's Gym against Archie (the Mongoose) Moore, George Plimpton ordered a “wildcat” drink called Crashweight Formula #7. Plimpton would need whatever bulking up he could get in order to survive the rough at-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tentions of the light-heavyweight champion of the world. "I am built rather like a bird of the stiltlike, wader variety—the avocets, limpkins, and herons," he wrote. "I can slide my watch up my arm almost to the elbow." On the day of the three-round exhibition, in 1959, Moore flicked uncertainly at Plimpton's most patrician part: "He jabbed and followed with a long lazy left hook that fetched up against my nose and collapsed it slightly. It began to bleed." The dizzying pain was short-lived, but the essay that followed, "Three with Moore," ranks high in the annals of Plimptoniana.

George Plimpton, who died last week at his town house, on East Seventy-second Street near the river, was a serious man of serious accomplishments who just happened to have more fun than a van full of jugglers and clowns. He was game for anything and made a comic art of his Walter Mitty dreams and inevitable failures. Borrowing from Paul Gallico, a sportswriter of an earlier generation, who tried to box Jack Dempsey, Plimpton deepened the idea of "participatory journalism," quarterbacking the Detroit Lions for a book called "Paper Lion," pitching to Willie Mays and Ernie Banks for "Out of My League," golfing with Sam Snead for "The Bogey Man." In further pursuit of material, he played basketball under Red Auerbach in Boston and triangle (Mahler's Fourth) under Leonard Bernstein in New York. He flew on a trapeze with the Flying Apollos, and took a bullet from John Wayne in "Rio Lobo." None, in any field but the literary, would call him skilled. Nick Pietrosante, a running back with the Lions, once told me, "As soon as he put on his shorts in training camp, with that oblong body and his dangling legs, you knew George had no ability whatsoever. He was a good guy, though. He had that Harvard accent . . . so I don't think he'd been knocked on his ass too many times. He was gutsy."

Plimpton did not necessarily need to be. He was born to a wealthy New York family. His grandfather was the founder of the Ginn publishing company and a philanthropist. His father was one of the founding partners of the law firm Debevoise & Plimpton. One of his forebears, Benjamin (Beast) Butler, was the governor-general of New Orleans and told Abraham Lincoln that he would agree to be his running mate "only if you die within three weeks." Plimpton's bearing and accent, his bonhomie, were such that Muhammad Ali, never good with names, used to call him "Kennedy." And for good reason. There was, on his C.V., St. Bernard's, Phillips Exeter, Harvard, Cambridge, and a wealth of connections everywhere in publishing, finance, social life. "In dime-store-novel terms," Plimpton said, "I had a perfectly pleasant, non-unhappy childhood."

Wm Hamilton

"Omigod—the style section is announcing threesomes!"

But Plimpton made something of his luck. He was generous with it. His good fortune became ours. While he was on vacation in Paris fifty years ago, he and a few friends—including Peter Matthiessen and William Styron—began talking about starting a literary magazine. They discussed the possibility of publishing the journal on birch bark and calling it the *Druid's Home Companion*, but paper and *The Paris Review* prevailed.

The Paris Review hardly proved a rich boy's venture, a lark before law school. For decades, in fact, Plimpton kept the *Review* going in his own house, with the help of an ever-changing team of hardworking editors and interns. Unlike *Partisan Review*, which came with a distinct political purpose, or *Evergreen Review*, which championed the Beats, *The Paris Review* was, and remains, an utterly catholic magazine, publishing many young writers, like V. S. Naipaul, Jack Kerouac, Philip Roth, and Terry Southern, who had little in common besides their enormous promise. The parade of the promising never ceased. Plimpton also devised the *Review's* most distinctive innovation, the extended literary interview, and conducted two of the earliest and best himself, with E. M. Forster and with Ernest Hemingway. There was always an air of good humor and celebration about the magazine, not least because it was an extension of its editor's personality. The parties Plimpton threw at his place were known for the beauty of the very tall young women and for the fierce undercurrent of literary competition. "All those authors," Norman Mailer once said, "myself included, walking rigidly through that packed room toward the drinks, our heads erect, only our eyes swivelling sideways to identify the enemy."

The next party Plimpton was going to throw is scheduled for October 14th, a gala dinner honoring *The Paris Review* on the occasion of its fiftieth birthday. It will be held at Cipriani, near Grand Central Terminal. The restaurant is a vast and vaulted room, a former bank, and holds hundreds, but it is not nearly large enough to contain the readers and writers who owe so much to the adventures and intelligence of George Plimpton.

—*David Remnick*

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THE FINANCIAL PAGE

THE COUP DE GRASSO

At the end of your typical Horatio Alger novel, the plucky hero, having risen from the streets, is allowed to bask in his good fortune. He's celebrated, not vilified, for the prosperity he has gained. So Dick Grasso, the former chairman of the New York Stock Exchange, a working-class kid from Queens who had made it into the city's upper echelons, could hardly have anticipated the public furor over his hundred-and-eighty-eight-million-dollar pay package—a sudden fit of populist outrage that, two weeks ago, forced him to resign. Americans love the idea of getting rich. What, then, made them rail against Dick Grasso's millions?

The answer might have something to do with the "ultimatum game," a well-known experiment in behavioral economics. The game is simple enough. Take two people. Give them a hundred dollars to split. One person (the proposer) decides, on his own, what the split should be (fifty-fifty, seventy-thirty, or whatever) and makes the other person a take-it-or-leave-it offer. If he accepts the deal, both players get their share of the money. If he rejects it, both players walk away empty-handed.

The rational thing for the second person to do is to accept the offer, whatever it is, since even one dollar is better than nothing. But in practice this rarely happens. Instead, lowball offers are almost always rejected. Apparently, people would rather throw away money than let someone else walk away with too much. Other experiments illustrate the same idea. Essentially, people are willing to pay to punish those they think are free-riding or acting unfairly, even when doing so brings them no material benefits. The economists Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis call this the principle of "strong reciprocity." Strong reciprocity works; it makes the whole system fairer. In the ultimatum game, for instance, the proposer usually ends up offering a relatively equitable split (say, sixty-forty) to insure that the other person accepts.

It so happened that, on the very day Grasso resigned, the primatologists Sarah F. Brosnan and Frans B. M. de Waal released a study showing that female brown capuchin monkeys seem to have a sense of fairness, too. Pairs of capuchins had been trained to give Brosnan pebbles in exchange for slices of cucumber. This idyllic monkey market economy was disrupted, though, when the scientists changed the pay scale, rewarding one monkey with a delicious grape and the other with the same measly old cucumber. Exposed to this injustice, the capuchins who were given cucumbers often refused to eat; forty per cent of the time, they stopped trading entirely. Things got worse when one monkey in each pair was given a grape for doing nothing at all. The other monkeys often responded by tossing away their pebbles; eighty per cent of the time, they stopped trading. The capuchins were willing to forfeit cheap food simply to express their displeasure at their partners' unearned riches.

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

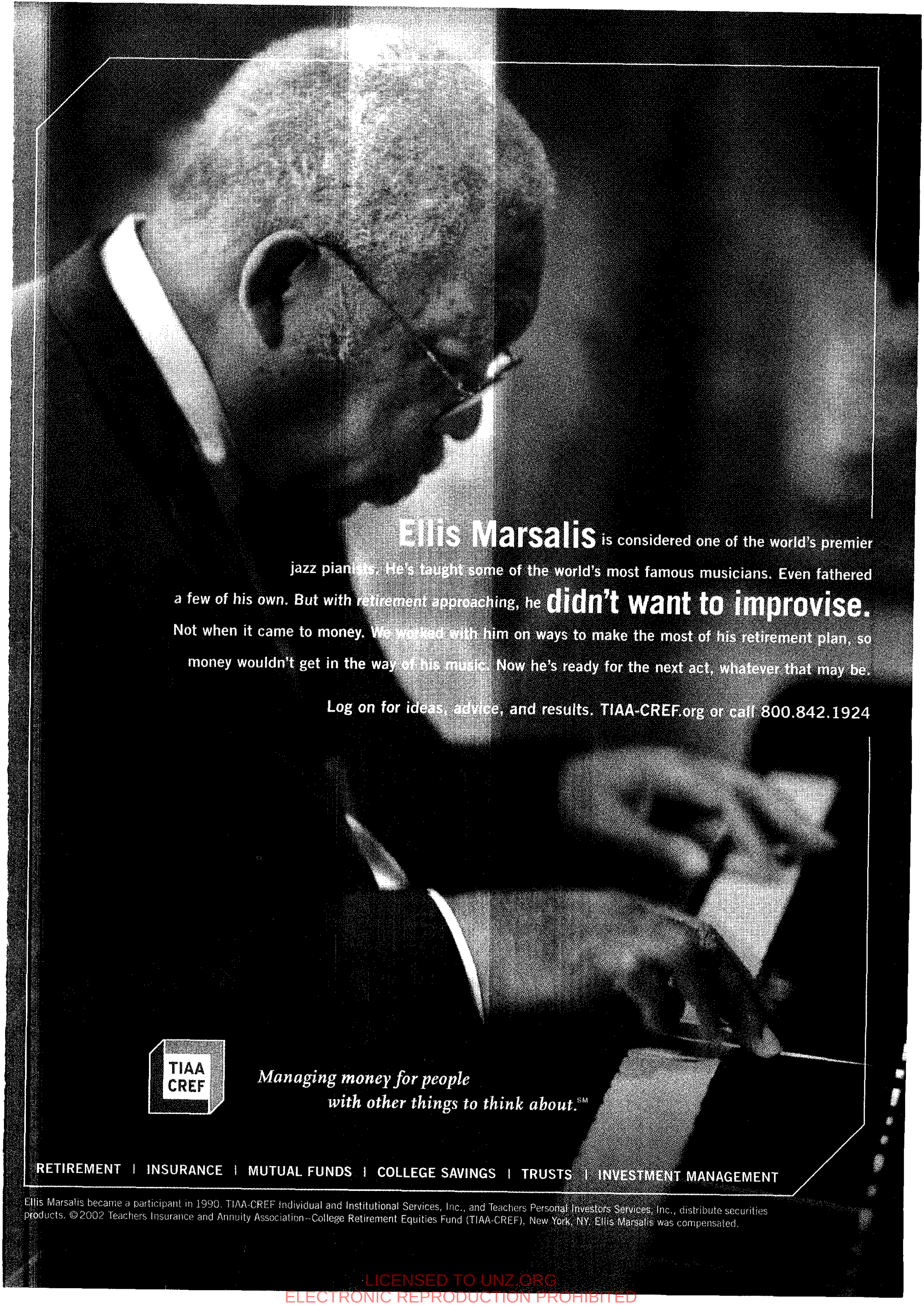
The point was not—as some of the news coverage suggested—that capuchins are innate sharers. (The capuchin who got the grape showed no inclination to give it up.) The monkeys want to distribute things fairly, not equally. They seem to believe that there should be a clear connection between work and pay. One variation of the ultimatum game shows that humans feel this way, too: instead of randomly assigning the proposer role, the researchers had the participants take a trivia quiz beforehand, and the ones who did best became proposers. Not one of their offers was rejected; apparently, people believed that a proposer who might be worthy of his status deserved to keep more of the money.

Our sense of fairness, in other words, demands that there be at least some relationship (however tenuous) between accomplishment and reward. We may feel that twenty million is an awful lot to pay a shortstop, but as long as Alex Rodriguez keeps hitting forty home runs a year no one is going to storm the barricades. In Dick Grasso's case, though, there was no relationship between what he was doing and what he was being paid. Grasso was very good at his job but far from irreplaceable: the Exchange isn't going to fall apart now that he's gone. More to the point, the job bore little resemblance to, say, running an investment bank, yet Grasso was being paid more than most Wall Street C.E.O.s—a feat in itself.

You might suppose that you could rely on the free market to insure that a person's pay reflects his value. But Grasso's pay wasn't determined by the free market. It was determined largely by a group of friends and cronies who had their own approach to salary negotiations: instead of figuring out how little they could pay Grasso and still keep him happy, they tried to figure out how much they could pay him. The board lavished grapes on him when he deserved—and would have been content with—cucumbers. Little surprise that just about everyone reacted like an indignant capuchin—including Grasso's predecessor, William Donaldson, who had earned much less than Grasso, and who, as the chairman of the S.E.C., a few weeks ago sent the Exchange a letter expressing concern, the regulatory equivalent of a cucumber fit.

On one level, the indignation is irrational. The Exchange isn't paying Grasso with the public's money, so why should the public care? But sometimes individually irrational actions can produce collectively rational results. For an economy to be healthy, people have to believe the game isn't rigged. So everyone loses when functionaries get paid like tycoons, and when a supposed bastion of the free market operates like Tammany Hall. Grasso may be the first American C.E.O. ever to be ousted simply for being overpaid. Why should he be the last?

—*James Surowiecki*



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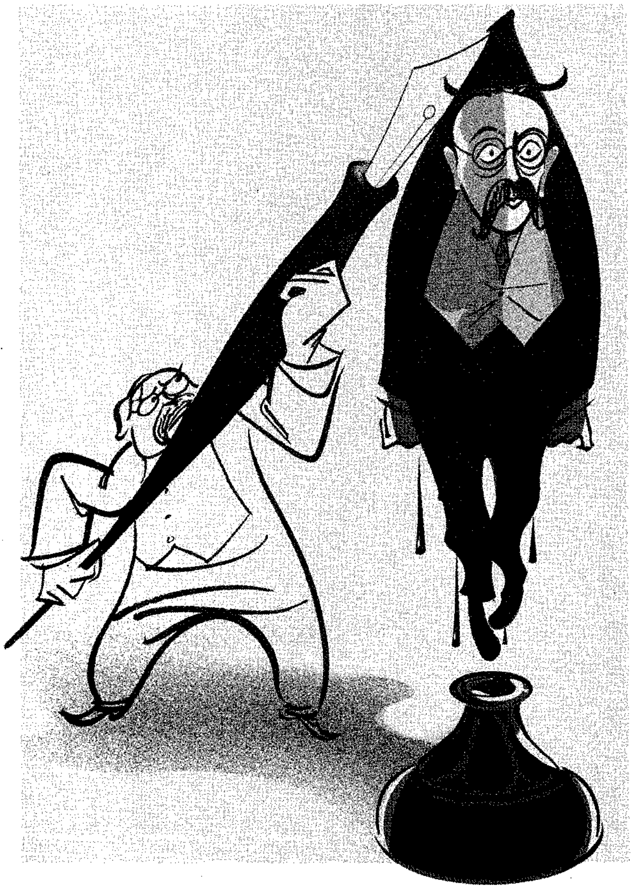
LITERARY LIVES

THE VERY BAD REVIEW

Two Victorian men of letters. One review from hell.

BY RACHEL COHEN



If you were John Keats, and, in the revered *Quarterly Review*, John Wilson Croker published his opinion that your poetry was "unintelligible," "diffuse," "tiresome," and "absurd," it would not comfort you much to remember that a bad review can happen to anyone; you would worry that your reputation had been destroyed forever. Three years later, when Lord Byron heard that you had died of consumption in Rome, he would wonder whether your life had been "snuffed out by an Article." If you were Henry James, and, in January of 1895, your play "Guy Domville" opened and the audience booed, and H. G. Wells—a new reviewer, who, the previous week, had praised Oscar Wilde's "An Ideal Husband"—predicted for your play "an early deathbed," you would suffer the "most horrible hours" of your life and resolve to give up the theatre forever. You would never have a popular success, as Wells and Wilde did, and you would have a hard time paying your bills. And if you were Edmund Gosse, a good friend of Henry James, and if, in October of 1886, in the same *Quarterly Review*, a critic named John Churton Collins pilloried your new book for forty-one of the most scathing pages in the history of reviewing, and the controversy was called by one paper "the scandal of the year," then you would write to your friend Thomas Hardy that you had been "felled, flayed, eviscerated, pulverized and blown to the winds." And there would be no solace whatever in the fact that your bad review was so very bad that it was to be considered emblematic for generations.

ERIC PALMA

Collins's review didn't just devastate; it revealed. And at the heart of a revealingly bad review is often something like what Edmund Gosse wrote of his relationship with his father: "a struggle between two temperaments, two consciences and almost two epochs." A writer and his or her critical nemesis are a little like star-crossed lovers; in the end, they're made not *for* each other but *against* each other. The shared accomplishment of Edmund Gosse and John Churton Collins was that the two men found each other, and then that they were so perfectly and irredeemably ill-matched.

In October of 1886, Edmund Gosse had just turned thirty-seven and John Churton Collins was thirty-eight. Gosse—now best known for the still widely read memoir he published in 1907, "Father and Son"—already enjoyed a reputation as one of the major literary critics of his day, a feat of considerable self-invention for someone with no university education. His father, the eminent naturalist Philip Henry Gosse, was a devout member of the Plymouth Brethren, an extreme Calvinist sect, and was so certain that his son was bound for the clergy that he saw no need to send him to university.

John Churton Collins received a solid education at Oxford, and had published highly regarded editions of the works of John Dryden and of the playwright Cyril Tourneur. But in 1885 he had been turned down for a professorship at Oxford, and was struggling to support his wife and seven children by writing reviews and teaching Latin at Mr. Scoones's, on Garrick Street, a "crammer" where future functionaries were got through their examinations. It was an improvement over his first job, addressing envelopes at two shillings and sixpence per thousand.

This suggests that envy might have played a role in the *Quarterly* confrontation, and yet in the preceding years the two men had been friendly acquaintances. During the summer of 1878, Collins stayed with Gosse for several pleasant days, and, in subsequent years, Gosse favorably reviewed Collins's editions of Tourneur and of Dryden. Collins wrote Gosse a number of grateful letters: "I thoroughly believe in your haven, and your genius and your ultimate success—success I mean in the highest sense of the word." Gosse, not knowing that for Churton Collins idealization was the stage before destruction, was flattered.

At the time of the *Quarterly* affair, Gosse, who was married and had three children, was the Clark Lecturer at Cambridge University. He had been recommended for the position by Matthew Arnold, Robert Browning, and Alfred Lord Tennyson, and succeeded Leslie Stephen, Virginia Woolf's distinguished father. Gosse—cheerful, perceptive, ingratiating, and witty—was the sort of person everyone wanted at a dinner party. Woolf later wrote that Gosse, at the end of his life, was loath to leave "a world which, with the solitary exception of Churton Collins, had showered upon him so many delightful gifts." She also said that he could be "as touchy as a housemaid and as suspicious as a governess"; his first biographer, Evan Charteris, described his way of walking as "curiously suggestive at once of eagerness and caution."

Though happy in his marriage, Gosse also had a long, close relationship with a sculptor, a man with the splendid name of Hamo Thornycroft. (When Lytton Strachey was asked about Gosse's sexuality, he said that Gosse was "Hamosexual.") It was an era in which double lives were a metaphor for moral quandary—Gosse's friend Robert Louis Stevenson published "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" in January of 1886, and Oscar Wilde's "The Picture of Dorian Gray" appeared in 1890—but Gosse wasn't furtive, though he did become more circumspect after the Wilde trials, refusing to have Wilde's friend Robert Ross in his home.

Gosse's scholarship was more sociable than rigorous. He forgot names and dates; he misquoted; in his collections of essays—"Gossip in a Library," "Aspects and Impressions"—he kept to pleasant surfaces and avoided the depths. T. S. Eliot, writing in *The Criterion* in 1931, declared, "I cannot conceive of a future society in which Sir Edmund Gosse would be possible," classifying him among "popular entertainers for whom there will be no demand." This is a little too cutting. Gosse was among the first to write an appreciation in English of André Gide, he worked hard to try to secure the Nobel Prize for James, and his biographies of Ibsen and Donne gave important recognition to a playwright who

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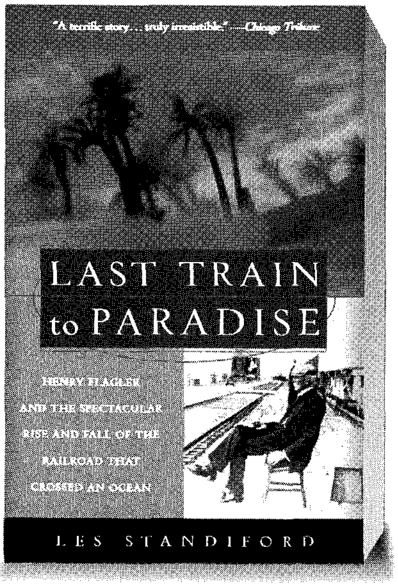
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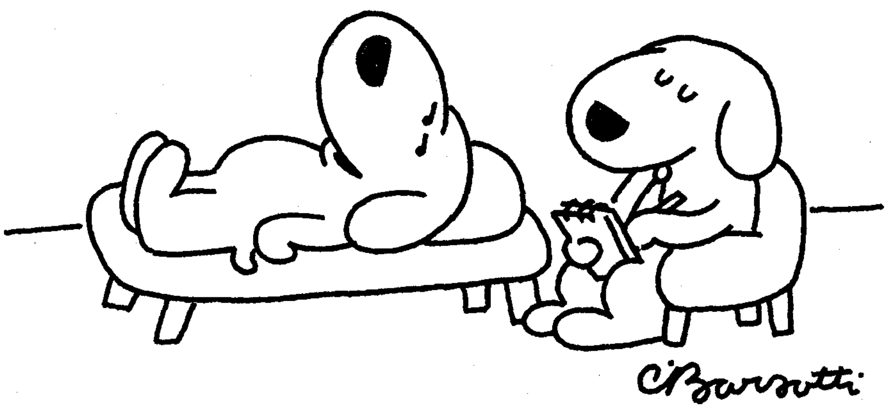


"They think they're accidents."

• •

was considered too radical and a poet then known only for his sermons.

John Churton Collins—tactless, encyclopedic, high-minded, and industrious—was less easy in the social circles so welcoming to Gosse. "My life, my deeper life," he wrote, "has been *essentially* and permanently *solitary*." He was, for a time, friendly with the poet Algernon Swinburne, also a friend of Gosse's; Swinburne was pleased to have Collins's edition of Tourneur dedicated to him. Churton Collins had been introduced to Browning, too, though, on seeing him again, he noted in his journal, "With Browning I was miserably disappointed . . . his conversation, except when he was speaking of his reminiscences about Carlyle—studiously commonplace"; the poet had, "of course, forgotten me." Churton Collins was interested in social life mostly as it profited his scholarship. His accounts of dinner parties tended to run along the lines of "[Swinburne] said he thought Prior was a much greater poet than Horace and we fought." Collins found his company among the poets of previous ages; he felt very close to those who wrote in Latin, and, he said, he "clung to Greek."

Collins had a talent for invidious distinction and a pained intolerance of the graceful sham; he sifted the evidence of literature as if he were a detective. He was a founding member of the Murder Club, where he and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle had a relationship of great mutual respect, and he often wrote about criminal cases for the papers. Collins's prodigious memory, his knowledge of Latin, and his historical precision made him uniquely well qualified to judge the portraits that Edmund Gosse drew of certain seventeenth-century English poets—Edmund Waller, Sir John Denham, William Davenant, and John Dryden—who had been strongly influenced by the Roman poets. Unfortunately, these figures were at the center of "From Shakespeare to Pope," Edmund Gosse's ambitious foray into serious literary scholarship.

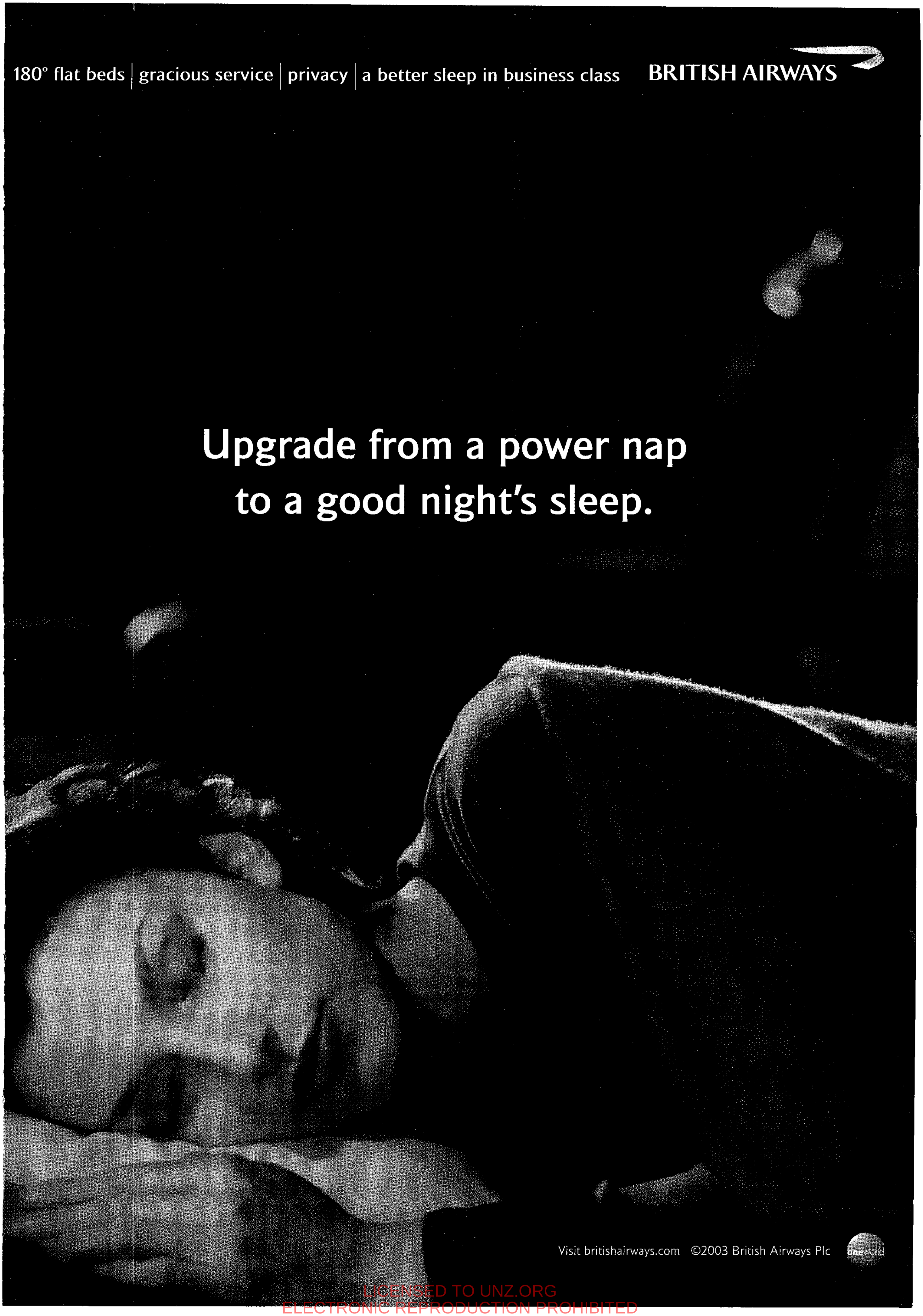
In 1884, newly appointed the Clark Lecturer, Gosse hastened off to give a series of lectures in America. He hoped, as he wrote to his friend William Dean Howells, who arranged the tour, that in America he would finally move beyond what he felt to be his current position in England: "hanging by my eyelids to the outer cliff of fame."

The lectures were terrifically well received, a tribute to Gosse's appealing style of presentation, given that the material—which chronicled the development of the distich (a strictly rhyming couplet that contains a complete thought)—was not guaranteed to enthrall a general audience. Perhaps his listeners could tell that Gosse didn't much like those he referred to as "classical" poets, either; he quoted Keats with enthusiasm and approved of the Romantics, who, with their "expression of personal conviction, of personal experience," were much more to his taste. Most of Gosse's ramble through the territory of Waller and Davenant had been covered by a succinct paragraph in Churton Collins's essay on Dryden, which Gosse didn't mention (though he did find space to remark, pettily, that, ever since Collins's new edition of Tourneur, people had stopped talking about the playwright altogether). The new darling of the American lecture circuit returned home amid a flurry of congratulations, and gave the lectures again at Cambridge. He wrote a dreadful dedicatory poem to Howells (one of its nine stanzas ran, "You shook it from my wing, / You dived to lift it from my glimmering deeps; / Now, wakened by your voice no more, it sleeps / And grows less mine than yours; here let it cling / And sing"), added a graceful preface, and published the lectures under the slightly misleading title "From Shakespeare to Pope: An Inquiry into the Causes and Phenomena of the Rise of Classical Poetry in England."

Reviews were generally favorable ("delicate and judicious in its criticism, brilliant in its illustration, easy and pointed in its style," one said), and Cambridge was pleased. John Churton Collins thought the reception given Gosse a disgusting example of logrolling, and he thought Gosse's book the latest iniquity in the catalogue of crimes against literary scholarship and pedagogy then being perpetrated by the British university.

Churton Collins was active in the University Extension Movement, which was attempting to make education more widely available, and he believed that English universities were failing to recognize the strengths of English literature—endowing chairs in Anglo-Saxon but none for scholars of Shakespeare or Milton, and teaching "Macbeth" only as an exercise in Elizabethan grammar. He envisaged a field of literary scholarship that would be both exacting and vital, and he felt this could be achieved by integrating the study of English literature with that of the classics: "The literature of antiquity was to Milton's genius what soil and light are to a plant." To him, the philology then dominating the academy was to the true study of literature what anatomy is to psychology: "The scalpel, which lays bare every nerve and every artery in the mechanism of the body, reveals nothing further." On the other hand, he found the sloppiness of Gosse's casual belletrism almost morally abhorrent. And he was afraid that any decent scholar who looked into "From Shakespeare to Pope" would immediately conclude that popular education at a high standard was impossible. Churton Collins didn't want to miss a moment that he felt to be propitious for reform.

For four months, Collins worked, as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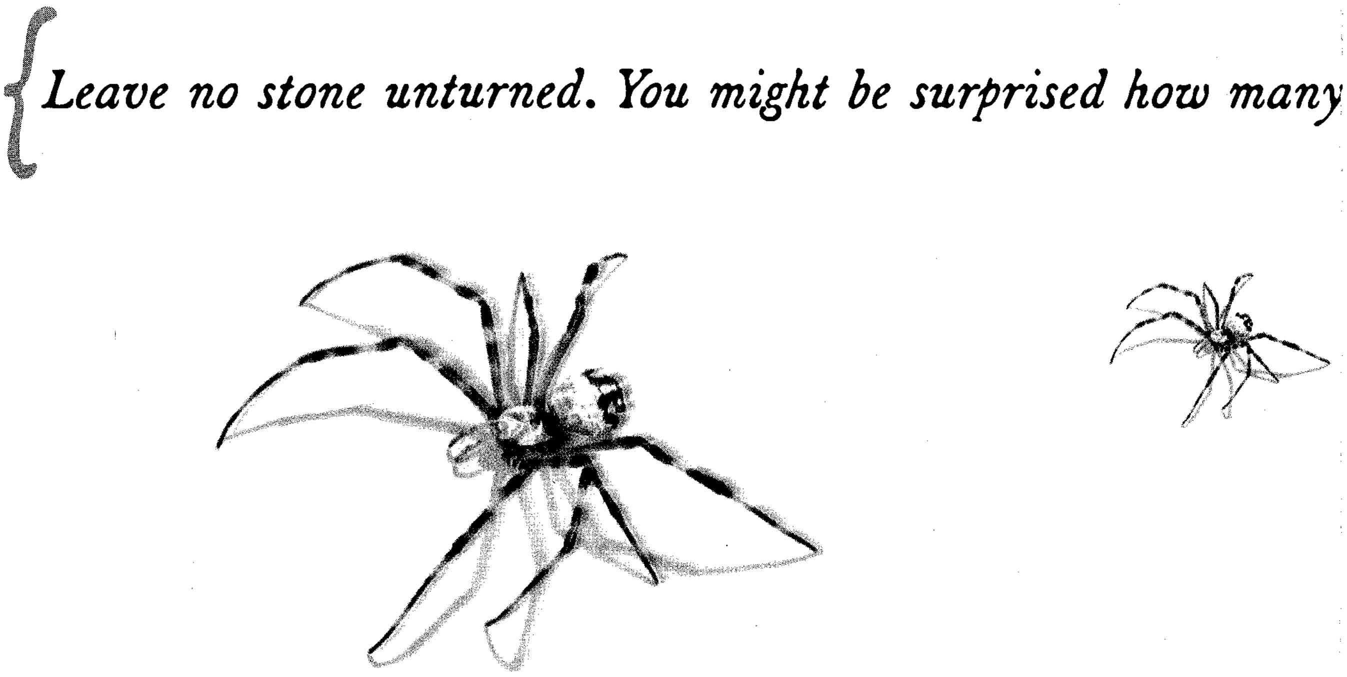
was his habit, until two or three in the morning; Gosse's book was the occasion to define a program, alluded to in the review's title, for "English Literature in the Universities." The review opened with a sentence that has since been widely quoted: "That such a book as this should have been permitted to go forth to the world with the *imprimatur* of the University of Cambridge, affords matter for very grave reflection."

Fourteen pages of Collins's review were concerned with the more egregious of Gosse's factual errors. Gosse claimed that the first English poet to write in distichs was the hero of his small volume, Edmund Waller, who is now known mostly for his lyrics "Go, Lovely Rose" and "On a Girdle," and who had, with Gossean facility, written panegyrics to both Oliver Cromwell and the restored King Charles. Waller, Collins pointed out, had most certainly *not* arrived first in the land of the distich ("No more absurd statement was ever made"); surely Mr. Gosse was aware of the heroic couplets written more than sixty years earlier by Nicholas Grimald, and those of Robert Greene and Joseph Hall, which predated Waller's "discovery" by nearly thirty years. To support his assertion, Gosse cited Waller's "To the King, on His Navy," repeatedly dating the poem to 1621; Collins noted that if Gosse had troubled to look at it, he would have found the correct date, 1626, "given under the title." The reviewer thought particularly galling the author's habit of depicting poets and politicians in a manner at once so vivid and so remote from their actual careers. The playwright James Shirley, for example, did not spend his time in exile going to "balls, comedies, and promenades"; rather, he was engaged, as Collins put it, in the "honourable drudgery" of teaching.

Collins was almost willing to forgive Gosse for not knowing whether "the Arcadia of Sidney and the Oceana of Harrington are in prose or verse," and even for not having bothered to look them up, "but that he should, under the impression that they are poems, have had the effrontery to sit in judgement on them, might well . . . make us ashamed of our species." Worse still, Gosse seemed to have been deliberately deceptive. He had detailed the diligent research with original documents that had allowed him to find a new and more accurate date of death for Sir John Denham; Churton Collins pointed out that the correct date was given in most of the major reference volumes and was the date under which Denham's burial is "in the register at the Abbey."

Drawing a breath, Collins wrote, "We have by no means exhausted the list of Mr. Gosse's blunders, but we have, we fear, exhausted the patience of our readers." He moved on to interpretation: it seemed odd to compare a poem of Davenant's to a huge dead tree and at the bottom of the same page to praise it for its "gorgeous and exotic imagery." And as for the style: "Was there no one who could save Mr. Gosse from making himself ridiculous by such eloquence as this: 'We who can see this Orpheus-like Charles torn to pieces by the outraged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liberties of England, and that comely head floating down the Hebrus of the Revolution'?" In sum: "A book so unworthy . . . of a great University has never before been given to the world."

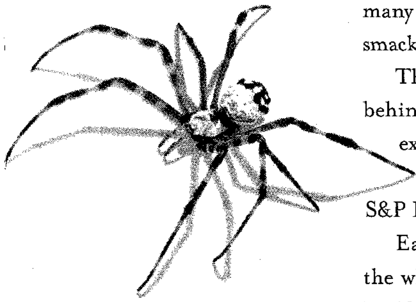
Gosse was humiliated. With his friends he did his best to be brave, writing in a letter to Howells, "I think that so long as one is not absolutely crushed out of competition, a blow of this kind is very useful," though he painfully felt "the sting of it at present; it is like being struck a blow in the face, and then tickled with nettles over the spot." His friends helped all they could: Matthew Arnold weighed in; Thomas Hardy and Robert Louis Stevenson sent supportive letters. Alfred Lord Tennyson was famously supposed to have declared the reviewer "a louse on the locks of literature," though it was Gosse who had circulated both the gibe and the attribution. (Tennyson had, less memorably, called Collins "a jackass.") Gosse himself wrote a public letter with a meagre defense of his scholarship and a few paragraphs explaining how hurtful had been this betrayal of friendship by "my *Quarterly* Reviewer."

Collins handled the matter with his customary maladroitness. He wrote that he thought Gosse was being very thin-skinned; after all, when, the previous year, he had said equally critical things about Swinburne in the *Quarterly Review*, he had heard nothing at all from the poet. As it happened, Swinburne hadn't known of that attack until alerted by Collins's letter. Now he came storming into the brawl ("May the God of letters preserve me from the deep disgrace of deserving his commendation!"), and Collins lost his admired friend and closest literary ally.

Cambridge stood behind its Clark Lecturer, although none of Gosse's colleagues seem to have thought the book particularly distinguished, or the review particularly wrong. Henry James wrote to William Dean Howells that Gosse had "paid, fearfully, the penalty" of his "false position" at Cambridge, and later said that Gosse had "a genius for inaccuracy." At Oxford, when a scholar made an error people took to saying, "He has made a Gosse of himself." Still, the consensus was that Collins's review was *not nice*. The way in which the literary world rallied behind Gosse has sometimes been taken to show that his offenses were not very serious. As Janet Malcolm has pointed out, Gosse's habitual inaccuracy can too easily be regarded as a sort of condition, "like nearsightedness"; she suggests, convincingly, that physiology is not nearly so helpful here as psychology. For underneath the literary quarrel was an "expression," as Gosse said of his favorite poets, "of personal experience."

Edmund Gosse and his biographers all tell the story that when he was born his father noted in his diary, "E. delivered of a son. Received green swallow from Jamaica." This is often interpreted as a sign of Philip Henry Gosse's rigidity and coldness. But Ann Thwaite, the biographer of both Gosses, has added to the picture; the naturalist—widely esteemed for his "History of the British Sea-Anemones and

opportunities crawl out.



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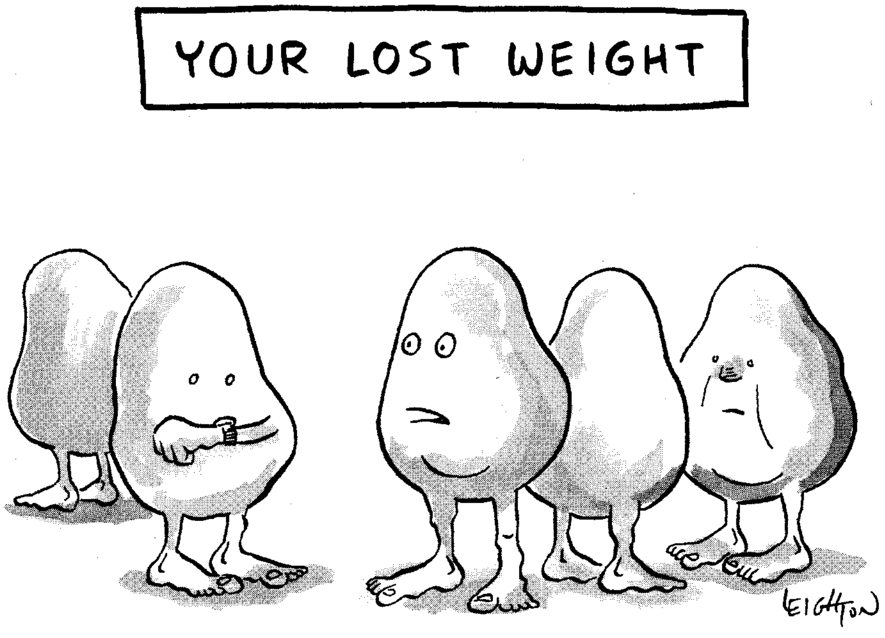
Corals"—was frequently engaging and cheerful, took pleasure in his specimens, loved his wife, Emily, and was very fond of his son, whom the family always thought of as a most appealing little bird. The Gosses were certain that their songbird had a spiritual gift and gave themselves completely to his religious education.

Edmund wondered if his mother might have been "intended by nature to be a novelist," but she had been convinced as an adolescent that fiction was the Devil's work and grew up to write religious tracts, for which she was very well known in her lifetime. She deprived herself and her son of the pleasure of stories. Gosse, in an often quoted passage of "Father and Son," writes of discovering, on a newspaper lining a box in the attic, some fragments of a thrilling serial, and of how he read them "kneeling on the bare floor, with indescribable rapture." Having no previous experience of fiction, he believed every word.

Perhaps Edmund was also meant to be a novelist; certainly his family story was the right material for him. Gosse had a gift for reminding the reader of the strange distortions one feels as a child. He rose to the most difficult occasions not so much by remembering them accurately as by conveying them with emotional force. Describing his mother's final illness, when he was seven, he says, "I felt, as I stood, awkwardly and shyly, by her high bed, that I had shrunken into a very small and insignificant figure, that she was floating out of my reach, that all things, but I knew not what nor how, were coming to an end."

The defining loss of John Churton Collins's life was the death of his father. When John was nine years old, Henry Ramsay Collins signed on, for vague reasons of ill health, to be a ship's doctor on a vessel bound for Australia and, in the harbor in Melbourne, fell off a pier, broke his leg, went into the hospital, was given a diagnosis of consumption, and died. Much grieved, John, his two younger brothers, and their mother drew close to one another; for financial support, they relied upon her brother. At school, John was held in high regard for the wonderful adventure stories he told. Once, the other boys were so appreciative that they got together to give him some money for books—he bought, among other things, the poems of Edward Waller. Churton Collins reported this moment of approbation to his mother with pleasure and some surprise; it seems that he rather expected to be overlooked.

At Oxford, he was a more confident figure: he wore a velveteen jacket, was never seen without his deerhound Prince, and reminded his classmate Andrew Lang of the charming and attractive Will Ladislaw, from George Eliot's "Middlemarch," then being published in installments. He still turned to his uncle for support and guidance, but, in being careless with funds, not getting a first at Oxford, and choosing criticism over the clergy, he proved such a disappointment that his uncle declined ever to see him again. This was particularly painful as the uncle had been quite proud of his clever nephew; the family always talked about John's immaculate botany collection and loved to tell the story of how he had once recited two thousand lines of Virgil from memory—a cousin checking his recitation against the original—and hesitated over only two words.

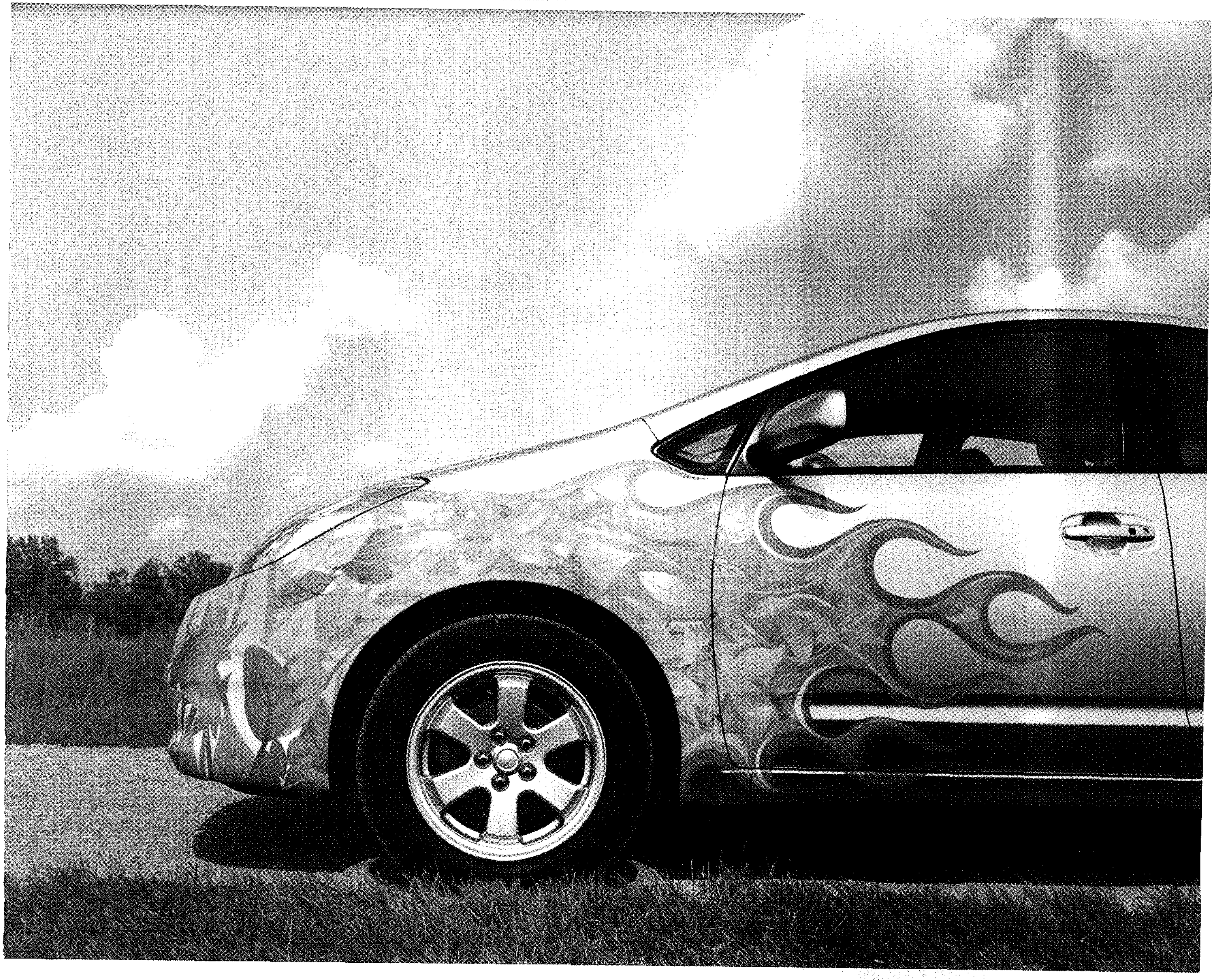


"Ready to head back?"

These were virtues that Philip Gosse would have prized. He used to send Edmund out for walks and demand a list of observations on his return. Edmund loved collecting specimens in the tidal pools of the Devonshire coast with his father, and some of the most vivid descriptions he wrote as an adult were of a world that had long since been destroyed: "No one will see again the submarine vision of dark rocks, speckled and starred with an infinite variety of colour, and streamed over by silken flags of royal crimson and purple." When Philip Gosse was away lecturing, his son sent him endearing letters, tossing off the scientific names of specimens they kept in glass tanks. (Philip Gosse is credited with inventing the marine aquarium.) "The Idotea is dead in the large tank and we think 1 *astrina gibbeossa* to. My catterpiller has changed its skin, it looks beautiful, it has changed the colour of its toes from black to pink." Edmund Gosse had discovered not only a new species but a new genus—*Phellia murocincta,* the walled corklet—before he was ten.

Though the Plymouth Brethren were fervently committed to adult baptism, the naturalist, treating his child as something like a specimen—"to pin me down, as it were, beyond any possibility of escape," Gosse later wrote—insisted that the boy be baptized at the age of ten. Instead of binding him to religion, as his father had hoped, it gave Gosse his first taste of public acclaim. When, at seventeen, he gave up his faith in favor of the seductions of the London literary world, he fully expected a complete break with his father, but no punishment ever came.

The world was less forgiving of Philip Gosse, who struggled to square his religious devotion and his insistent empiricism. As Edmund wrote of his father, "Every instinct in his intelligence went out at first to greet the new light" of evolutionary theory, but his strictly literal interpretation of doctrine held him back. From



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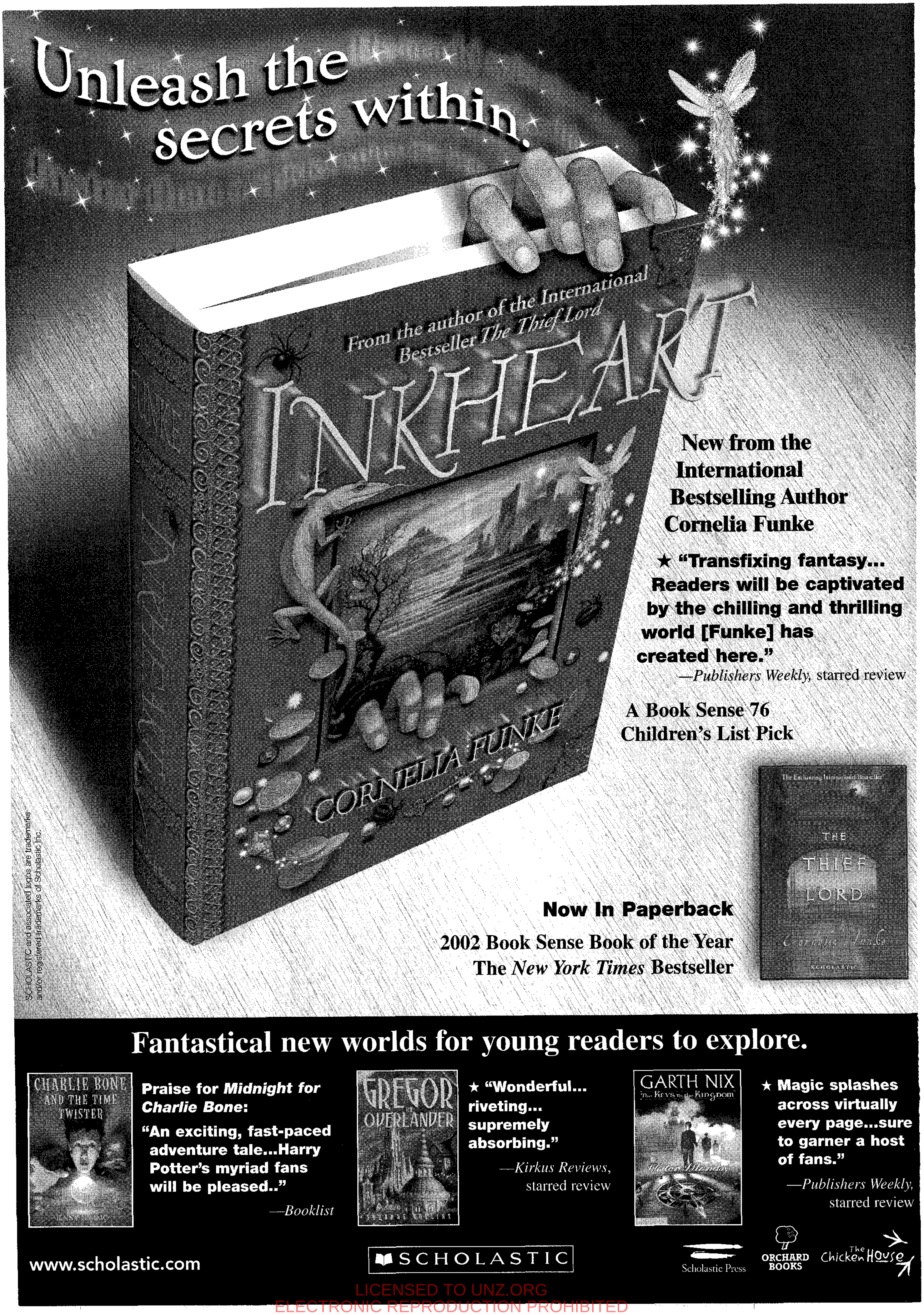

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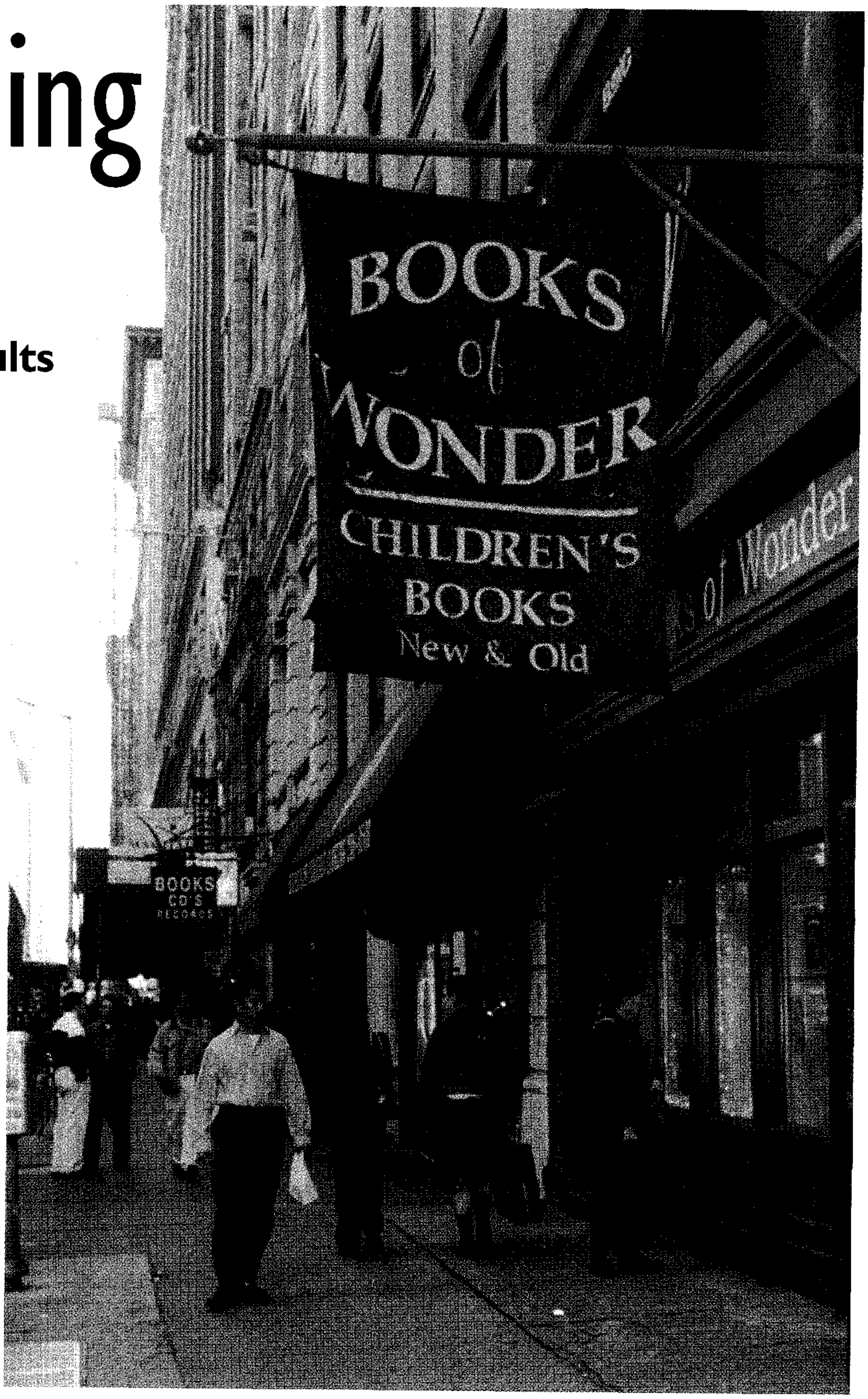


COURTESY OF NEW YORK CITY'S BOOKS OF WONDER

History was made on June 21, 2003, when the fastest selling book in the annals of book publishing flew off the shelves of the children and young adult sections of bookstores across the country. Of course, the magic was courtesy of J. K. Rowling and her latest installment of the adventures of a young, gifted wizard in "Harry Potter and The Order of the Phoenix."

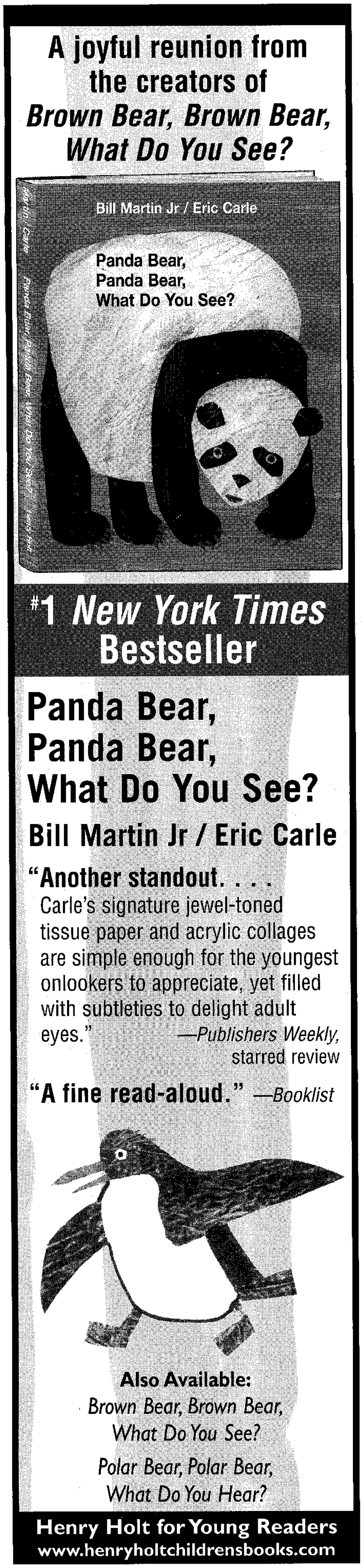
The amazing feat of this epic, 870-page volume—more than five million copies were sold the first day it came out—inspired plenty of retail alchemy. Inventive in-store events catalyzed the enthusiasm of readers of all ages. There were midnight readings, in-store incantations, and riveting resurrections of past Potter tales. And while Rowling's wizardry continues to redefine success in book publishing, the phenomenon, like the most powerful of spells, has resulted in some incredible ripple effects.

Millions of people perusing the shelves of independent bookstores discovered not only the magic of Hogwarts but the enchantment that can be found on the pages of other great books. And in response to the chorus of "What do we read next?" thousands of independent booksellers offer sage advice on where to turn once they've read Rowling's latest. **The Book Sense Children's 76** list shares the personal recommendations of well-seasoned and well-informed booksellers coast to coast. Highlights from the latest Children's 76 follow, with a fascinating selection of books for kids—from toddlers to teens.

POST-POTTERISM

For the millions of young readers intrigued by the mysterious, several new novels promise similar forays into worlds of adventure and enchantment.

Nineteen-year-old Christopher Paolini could be a graduate of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. His novel **Eragon: Book One of the Inheritance Trilogy** (Alfred A. Knopf Books for Young Readers) relates the fantastic and suspenseful tale of a young man and a dragon coming of age at the same time. Erin Ostrander of Secret Garden


A joyful reunion from the creators of *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?*

#1 *New York Times* Bestseller

Panda Bear, Panda Bear, What Do You See?

Bill Martin Jr / Eric Carle

"Another standout. . . . Carle's signature jewel-toned tissue paper and acrylic collages are simple enough for the youngest onlookers to appreciate, yet filled with subtleties to delight adult eyes." —*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

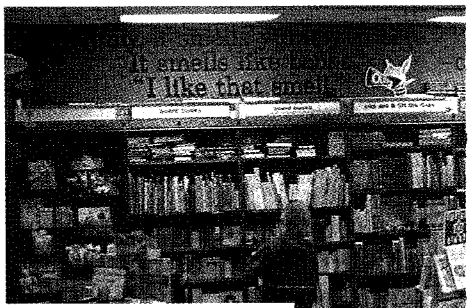
"A fine read-aloud." —*Booklist*

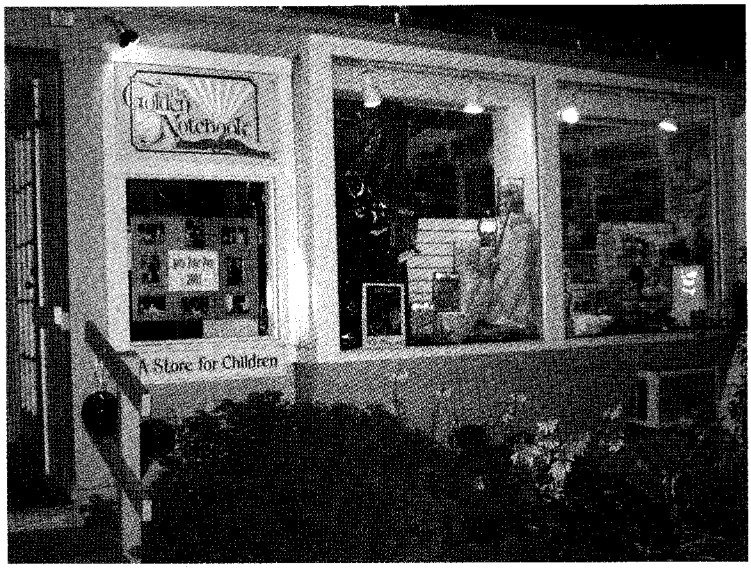
Also Available:
Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?
Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?

Henry Holt for Young Readers
www.henryholtchildrensbooks.com

Bookshop in Seattle, WA, says Paolini has created a "well-conceived world that readers will love travelling to. I'm already eager for the next book!"

Cornelia Funke's **Inkheart** (The Chicken House/Scholastic Press) poses an intriguing question: What would reality be like if our favorite storybook characters came to life? When these adored idols turn out to be disruptive and less than lovable, some bibliophile friends must work together to get them back onto the page. "You won't be able to put this book down, but it's so good, you won't want it to end," promises Amarin Enyart of Book People in Austin, TX.





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GRANDMA GREATS

For generations, children have been transported "over the river and through the woods" on the way to Grandmother's house. That's no surprise, given a grandma's unparalleled place in their hearts. Two new books introduce some of the most memorable grandmothers ever.

In **Granny Torrelli Makes Soup** by Newbery medal-winner Sharon Creech (Joanna Cotler Books), twelve-year-old Rosie struggles to get along with her best friend, Bailey. In a novel seasoned with delicious stories and secret family recipes, Rosie's grandmother dishes up plenty of helpful advice. "Heartwarming, humorous, realistic, and very down to earth, this series of vignettes illustrates the power of love and family," says Sue Carita of The Toadstool Bookshop in Milford, NH. "Rosie's exuberance is a real treasure!"

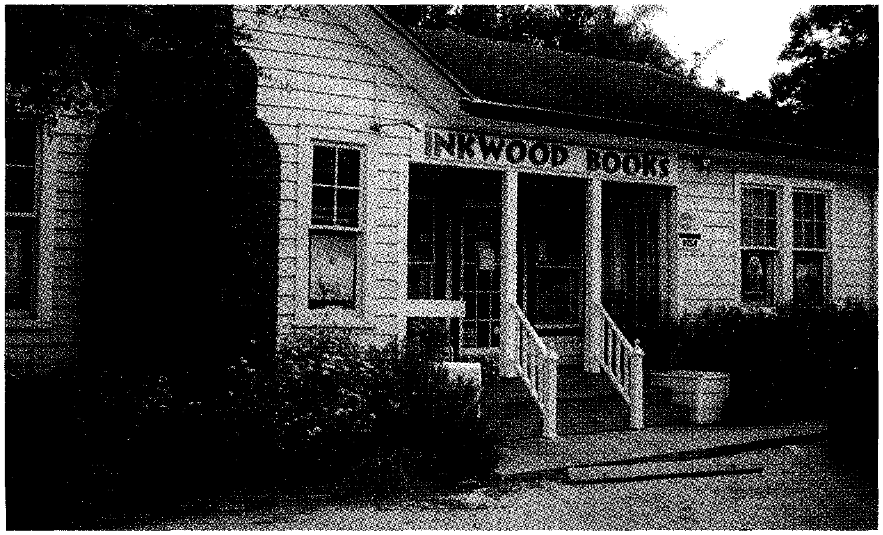
In the eyes of a child, the handbag dangling from grandmother's arm can bear tantalizing treats. What trinkets or jewels can one find there? **My Granny's Purse** by P. H. Hanson (Workman Publishing) offers young children free reign to explore its contents. The trove of mementos they discover—rings, keys, a letter, photos, a passport with stamps from faraway, exotic lands—reveals the incredible life journey of its owner. The book is "a fun-filled adventure for both the very young and those more mature. Sneak a peek into granny's purse and try on her spotted leopard sunglasses! Kids will love them, and all of the other treasures in granny's purse," says Marie Nelson of The Velveteen Rabbit Bookshop in Fort Atkinson, WI.

A LITERARY MENAGERIE

Animal tales (as well as tails) have long been a treasured part of children's literary canon. With their intriguing ideas about the wealth of meanings that reside in a cat's purr, a dog's bark, a mouse's squeak, or a pig's oink, such stories transport young readers into the hearts and minds of the planet's many nonverbal inhabitants. Several new titles offer unforgettable adventures on four legs.

In Kate DiCamillo's **The Tale of**

Despereaux, with illustrations by Timothy Basil Ering (Candlewick Press), a small mouse with big ears embarks on a gigantic life adventure. Nikki Mutch of the UConn Co-op in Storrs, CT, asks, "Do you love fairy tales? Do you think that you would like to read a story about a mouse that falls in love with music and light and a pretty little princess? How about if we throw in some forbidden soup, a spool of red thread, a bitter angry rat, and a foolish servant girl? Open this book, turn the pages, and hear with your heart the tale of a little mouse named Despereaux."



The first day of school can be difficult enough without a know-it-all dog in the class. Or, it might be the best day of school ever. That's the premise behind **Smartypants (Pete in School)** by Maira Kalman (G. P. Putnam's Sons). The author "has me hooked with this wonderfully funny tale," says Leslie Reiner of Inkwood Books in Tampa, FL. "She addresses the anxieties of the classroom, and the hilarity of a dog that masters everything. The drawings are so clever; the older the reader, the greater will be the appreciation."

A plaintive "mew" from within a patch of weeds is the beginning of an unforgettable friendship between a little girl and a tiny kitten. **Ginger Finds a Home**, by Charlotte Voake (Candlewick Press), "is the prequel to one of my favorite books, 'Ginger,' " reports Kim Soyka of the Book House of Stuyvesant Plaza in Albany, NY. The picture book describes "just how this cute orange cat came to stay with the little girl. She took the time to help a thin, hungry kitten and found a loving friend."

MASTERFULLY MINDED

Given the fact that children's books often exhibit brilliantly captivating illustrations, it's no surprise that the visionary works and ideas of the world's great artistic masters can attract and fascinate children.

"A coffee-table book for babies and their ultra-cool companions" is how Dana Harper of Brystone Children's Books in Fort Worth, TX, describes **Petit Connoisseur: Art** by Karen Salmansohn (Tricycle Press). With illustrations by Brian Stauffer, "This witty little book is a work of art with its funky collages and super-hip sensibility," says Harper. The début book of a new series, this flagship tome dabbles in everything from Dada to Dali, providing young prodigies with the acumen needed to leap successfully from play date to gallery gala.

Imagine if Andy Warhol was your uncle? Such was the fate of famed children's illustrator James Warhola. In **Uncle Andy's A Faabbbulous Visit With Andy Warhol!** (G. P. Putnam's Sons), Warhola relates the saga of leaving his small-town home for Uncle Andy's cavern of imagination and eccentricity. Through Warhola's eyes, we see the things that made his visits memorable: the wonderful disarray of Andy's house, waking up surrounded by important art and incredible *objets trouvés*; trying on Andy's wigs; sharing the run of the house with twenty-five cats (all named Sam). Notes Kara Luger of Chinook Bookshop in Colorado Springs, CO, "The book provides funny and humanizing insight into the famous pop personality."

NEW FROM
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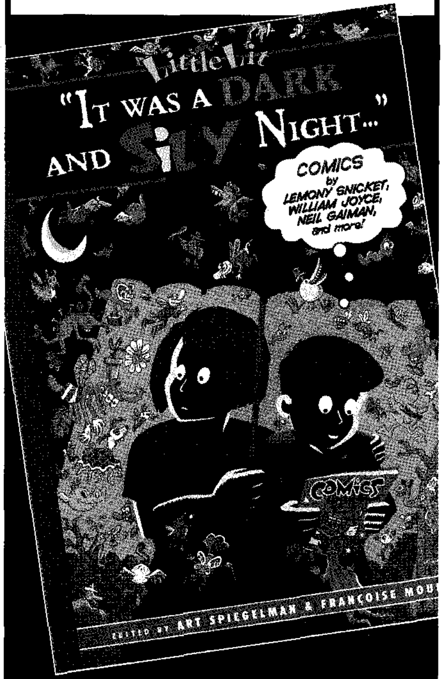
ART SPIEGELMAN AND
FRANÇOISE MOULY,
ART EDITOR OF *THE NEW YORKER*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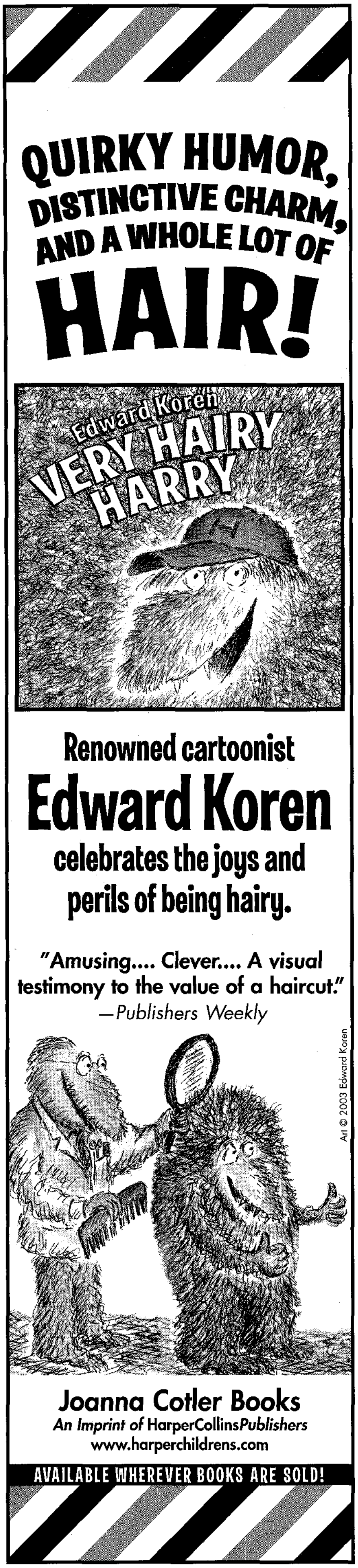

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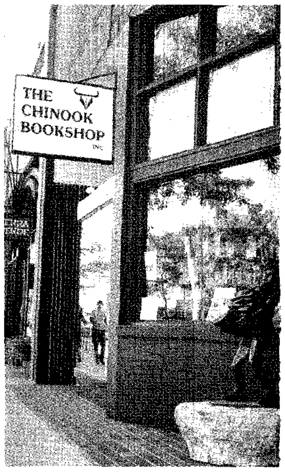
AVAILABLE WHEREVER BOOKS ARE SOLD!

ADOLESCENT ANGST

A new crop of young adult novels depicts the raw emotions and painful vulnerabilities of adolescence, generating an undeniable intensity in the process.

The urban cityscape, with all of its vibrant energy and dark undertones, provides the setting for **Birdland** by Tracy Mack (Scholastic Press). When two high school friends collaborate on a documentary for a school project, they resolve to search for answers to enigmatic questions about an older brother—a local poet who loved jazzman Charlie Parker. In the process they are exposed to the gritty realities of their New York City neighborhood. Comparing the book to a perfect piece of jazz, Alison Morris of Wellesley Booksmith in Wellesley, MA, says that it "floats its way through the full range of human emotions, from happy satisfaction to the sorrowful desperation of loss and longing."


THE CHINOOK BOOKSHOP INC.

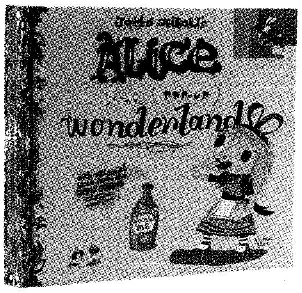
CLOVKWISE FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF THE VELVETEEN RABBIT BOOKSHOP; UCONN CO-OP; CHINOOK ROOKSHOP

A seemingly innocuous mistake sends ripples of racism through a middle school in **The Jacket** by Andrew Clements (Aladdin Paperbacks). When a white student sees an African-American wearing his brother's jacket, he assumes the jacket has been stolen. When he is proven wrong, the accuser is forced to face an uncomfortable question: Would he have made the same assumption if the boy hadn't been African-American? How he answers that question reveals some unsettling truths about both his family and his community. "This is an excellent book to get middle-schoolers thinking about racism and the subtle ways it affects our thinking," writes Philip Schweiger, formerly of The Children's Corner Bookshop, in Spokane, WA.

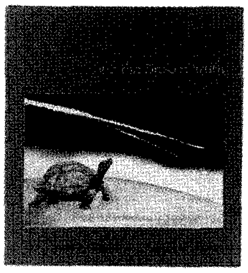
While the seemingly endless barrage of TV reports about Middle East tensions can dull the senses, **The Enemy Has a Face** by Gloria D. Miklowitz (Eerdmans Books for Young Readers) offers an arresting perspective. When a brother and sister are transplanted from Israel to Los Angeles, the seventeen-year-old brother disappears. His sister is convinced he has been abducted by terrorists. Eileen Barron of Vroman's Bookstore in Pasadena, CA, observes, "this intricately woven tale explores the protracted friction between Israel and the Palestinians."

For more information on The Book Sense Children's 76 list, consult your local independent bookseller or visit www.BookSense.com.

Publisher's Picks


J. Otto Seibold's
Alice
in Pop-Up
Wonderland

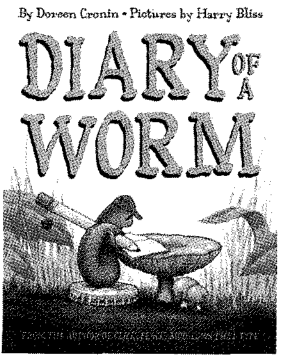
Alice may have fallen down the rabbit hole, but in the new **Alice in (Pop-Up) Wonderland** by J. Otto Seibold (Orchard Books) she is jumping off the page instead. A fresh and unconventional look at Lewis Carroll's timeless masterpiece.



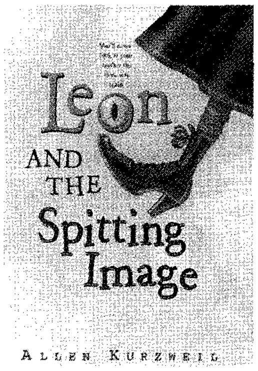
In **Old Turtle and the Broken Truth** by Douglas Wood with watercolors by Jon J. Muh (Scholastic Press), the sagacious tortoise from the award-winning book, "Old Turtle," returns with some timely wisdom about the interaction of man and nature.

In the latest adventure from Toot & Puddle, **Charming Opal** by Holly Hobbie (Little, Brown and Company), Puddle's cousin Opal loses a tooth and Puddle goes to great lengths to ensure a visit from the tooth fairy.

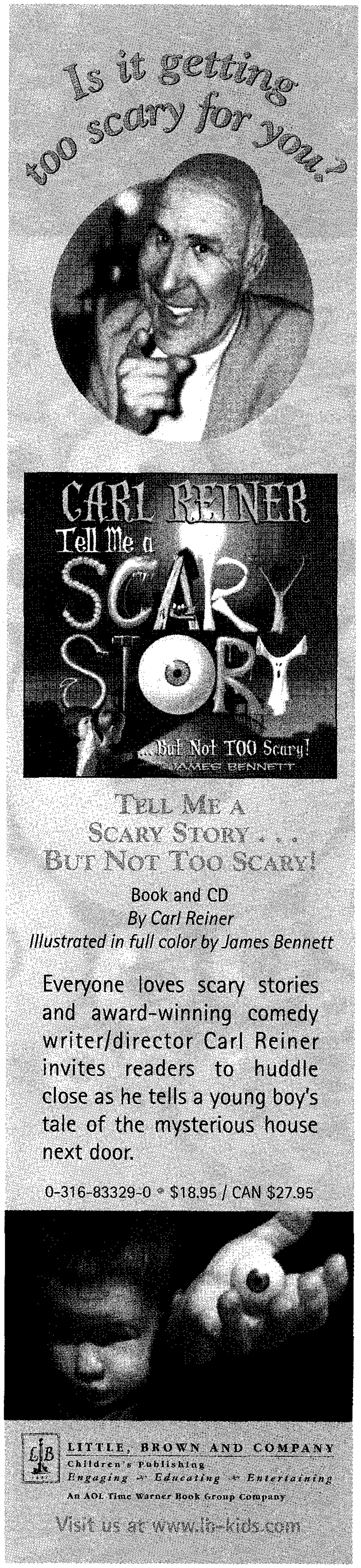
Buster was a happy canine who had everything. And then he met Betty, the new family cat. In **Buster** by Denise Fleming (Henry Holt and Company), at first Buster and Betty fight like cats and dogs, but they end up forging an unlikely friendship


By Doreen Cronin • Pictures by Harry Bliss
DIARY OF A WORM

Imagine a childhood where you could eat your homework and never take a bath. Such is the blissful existence in **Diary of a Worm**, a hilarious chronicle of an underground dweller by *New York Times* bestselling author Doreen Cronin, with pictures by Harry Bliss (Joanna Cotler Books).


Leon
AND
THE
Spitting
Image
ALLEN KURZWEIL

You'll never look at your teacher the same way again! Leon Zeisel isn't having a typical fourth grade experience. In Allen Kurzweil's **Leon and the Spitting Image** (Greenwillow Books), Leon discovers that he can actually control his teacher with one of his homework assignments. Let the fun begin.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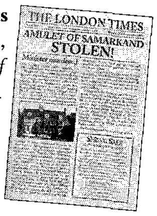
CHILDREN'S BOOK sense 76

Here are the Top 10 Picks for this Book Sense 76, as tallied from hundreds of recommendations from independent booksellers.

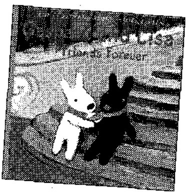
1. ERAGON: The Inheritance, Book I, by Christopher Paolini (Knopf, $18.95, 0375826688) "A guaranteed hit for any reader who loves fantasy. Drawing on the tradition of J.R.R. Tolkien, Anne McCaffrey, Philip Pullman, and other great fantasists, Christopher Paolini has woven together an exciting suspense-filled adventure of one young man coming of age in partnership with the first dragon born in over a century."—**Peter Glassman, Books of Wonder, New York, NY** Also a Listening Library Audio (0807219622, Unabridged)

SHARON CREECH
Granny TORRELLI makes SOUP

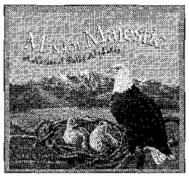
3. GRANNY TORRELLI MAKES SOUP, by Sharon Creech (Joanna Cotler/HarperCollins, $15.99, 0060292903) "Over zesty Italian cooking, Granny Torrelli offers insight to Rosie by telling tales of her own childhood friend Pedro. It is simple wisdom told with brilliant charm."—**Mary Brice, Tattered Cover Bookstore, Denver, CO** Also a Harper Children's Audio (0060564326, Unabridged)



5. THE AMULET OF SAMARKAND: Bartimaeus Trilogy Book 1, by Jonathan Stroud (Miramax, $17.95, 078681859X, October) "Jonathan Stroud's *The Amulet of Samarkand* is a superb magical adventure story. This tale of an ambitious teenage magician is a funny, tense, elegantly written fantasy adventure, highly recommended."—**Dennis Fitzgerald, All for Kids Books & Music, Seattle, WA** Also a Listening Library Audio (0807219533, Unabridged)

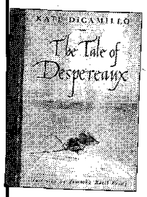


7. GASPARD AND LISA FRIENDS FOREVER, by Anne Gutman; Georg Hallensleben (Illus.) (Knopf, $9.95, 0375822534) "The Gaspard and Lisa books are a complete delight—funny, exciting, and teaching interesting lessons. And I absolutely adore the illustrations, which are bright, cute, and certainly age-appropriate to the text. To me, they're just perfect, some of my very favorite books."—**Carrie Graves, The Happy Bookseller, Columbia, SC**

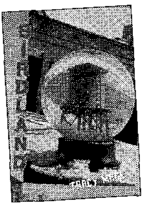


9. M IS FOR MAJESTIC: A National Parks Alphabet, by David Domeniconi; Pam Carroll (Illus.) (Sleeping Bear Press, $17.95, 1585361380) "This is a wonderful addition to Sleeping Bear Press' alphabet series. Great rhyming text for little ones and detail boxes for older children—plus large colorful illustrations—bring learning about America's national treasures to life."—**Lisa Fabiano, Hearts & Stars Bookshop, Canton, MA**

2. INKHEART, by Cornelia Funke (Chicken House/Scholastic, $19.95, 0439531640, October) "*Inkheart* is a wonderfully told fairy tale and adventure that will be enjoyed by both young and old alike. I will be treasuring and handing this story down to my children, and, I hope, to their children one day."—**Lee Musgjerd, Lee's Book Emporium, Glasgow, MT** Also a Listening Library Audio (0807219509, Unabridged)



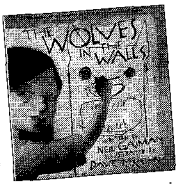
4. THE TALE OF DESPEREAUX, by Kate DiCamillo; Timothy Basil Ering (Illus.) (Candlewick, $17.99, 0763617229) "Kate DiCamillo again proves herself to be a master of narration, creating characters who practically whisper in the ears of her readers, drawing us ever closer to the marvelous worlds of her oh-so-imaginative invention."—**Alison Morris, Wellesley Booksmith, Wellesley, MA** Also a Listening Library Audio (0807219479, Unabridged)



6. BIRDLAND, by Tracy Mack (Scholastic, $16.95, 0439535905, October) "Tracy Mack creates power in her words, setting, and characters. As best buds Jed and Flyer film a documentary of their neighborhood for a school project, we feel the rhythm, beat, and heart of loss, family, and friendship."—**Jonatha Foli, Copperfield's Books, Sebastopol, CA**

Leon AND THE Spitting Image
ALLEN KURZWEIL

8. LEON AND THE SPITTING IMAGE, by Allen Kurzweil; Bret Bertholf (Illus.) (Greenwillow, $15.99, 0060539305) "What could be so difficult about passing fourth grade? For Leon, who is known to have poor fine motor skills, having to sew everyday for a teacher who herself seems to be patched together is surefire torture. Mystery, fantasy, and comedy, all mixed with pure magic—this book has it all." —**Marilyn Smith, Hawley-Cooke Booksellers, Louisville, KY** (Also a Harper Children's Audio, 0060564334, Abridged)



10. THE WOLVES IN THE WALLS, by Neil Gaiman; Dave McKean (Illus.) (HarperCollins, $16.99, 038097827X) "Before Neil Gaiman became well-known and widely appreciated as a novelist, he and illustrator Dave McKean worked some real magic in the graphic novel/comics field. McKean combines scratchy, primitive lines with photographs and computer-treated images to create a stirring visual narrative that accompanies and complements Gaiman's subtly layered story."—**Michael F. Russo, St. Mark's Bookshop, New York, NY**

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PERSONALITY - PASSION - KNOWLEDGE - COMMUNITY - CHARACTER this dilemma came “Omphalos: An Attempt to Untie the Geological Knot,” in which Philip Gosse asserted that God had made even the fossil record during the six days of creation. He fully believed that “Omphalos” was his real contribution to science, and, after its publication, when the great naturalists of his acquaintance—Huxley, Wallace, Kingsley, and Darwin himself—remained silent, or respectfully explained that they could not in the least agree, “a gloom, cold and dismal, descended upon our morning teacups.”

In “From Shakespeare to Pope,” Gosse argued that the development of literature should be traced not only by “contemplation of the best” but also by studying the lesser writers who were part of “the spectacle of motion, of evolution.” With the lesson of his father’s failure in mind, he tried to consider poetry through something like a framework of natural selection. Gosse hoped that “From Shakespeare to Pope” was his contribution to a theory of literary history; Churton Collins knew it was his “Omphalos.” Gosse asked, “Why was it not John Milton instead of Edmund Waller to whom it was given to revolutionize poetry in English literature?,” and, as if examining geological strata, he answered, “Broadly speaking, it was because Milton was born three years later than Waller.” Churton Collins thought this was “amazing nonsense”—in no true understanding of literature could you say that “Go, Lovely Rose” had the influence of “Paradise Lost.” But then these two temperaments were always irreconcilable: John Churton Collins was looking for an ideal and Edmund Gosse was looking to get out from under one.

Very bad reviews are not, in the final accounting, a good index of their recipients’ later success. After Croker published his terrible review, Keats had one of the most productive years of his life. Henry James set aside his play, returned to novels, and went on to write “The Ambassadors,” “The Wings of the Dove,” and “The Golden Bowl.” Edmund Gosse, too, fared well. Choosing not to stand for reëlection at Cambridge, he left there without disgrace in 1889. The year before, his father had died. Edmund claimed that Philip Gosse, in terrible pain, had, at the last, been enraged with God, though this may have been his usual enhancement of the story, as others reported a more peaceful death. Still, the younger Gosse had felt what Henry James in his letter of condolence called “the removal of so unmitigable a presence,” and in some way this freed him. Years after the *Quarterly* review, Gosse made his most resonant portraits in “Father and Son”; William Dean Howells expressed the general opinion when he wrote that “in all the autobiographic books I have read, I remember nothing equalling it.” Beginning in 1919, Gosse had a regular column in the *Sunday Times,* through which he wielded enormous influence. He was given an honorary degree from Cambridge in 1920, was knighted in 1925, and after one round of celebrations genially complained that he was being “stifled in roses.”

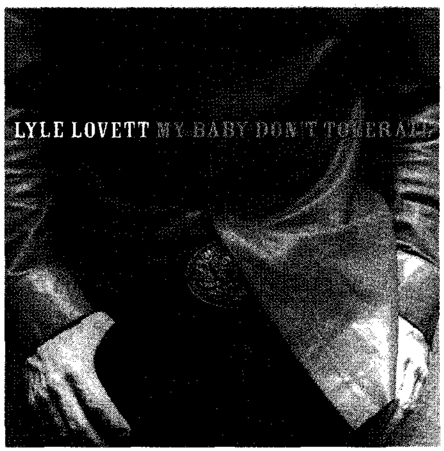
Just over a decade after “the scandal of the year,” Gosse wrote “A Short History of Modern English Literature.” With the spectre of Churton Collins in mind, he sent frantic letters to his publisher with corrections. Churton Collins did get hold of the book and did savage Gosse again, using the same strategy and criticisms and even the same turns of phrase, but the forgetfulness that made Gosse vulnerable to attack also spared him from lasting injury. This time, Gosse and his friends paid scant attention; the “Short History,” though error-ridden, became a standard text and went through ten printings.

“The secret of success in life is known only by those who have not succeeded,” Collins once wrote with mordant self-knowledge. He applied for a chair of English literature at Oxford in 1904, and though the twenty-seven referees thought his the best application, he was turned down. He did gain an appointment at Birmingham University, but he remained isolated from the community of scholars so dear to him, and his extraordinary memory—for dates and distichs, abandonments and betrayals—may have worsened a tendency toward melancholy. In 1908, the year after “Father and Son” was published to wide acclaim, John Churton Collins was found drowned in a ditch near Lowestoft, possibly a suicide.

In the end, the *Quarterly* affair left the pattern of the two men’s lives intact. When the denizens of Cambridge and the House of Lords and the subscribers to the *Sunday Times* decided whom to read and whom to honor, Edmund Gosse they remembered, and John Churton Collins they forgot. ♦

LYLE
LOVETT

MY BABY
DON’T
TOLERATE



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ANNALS OF PUBLISHING

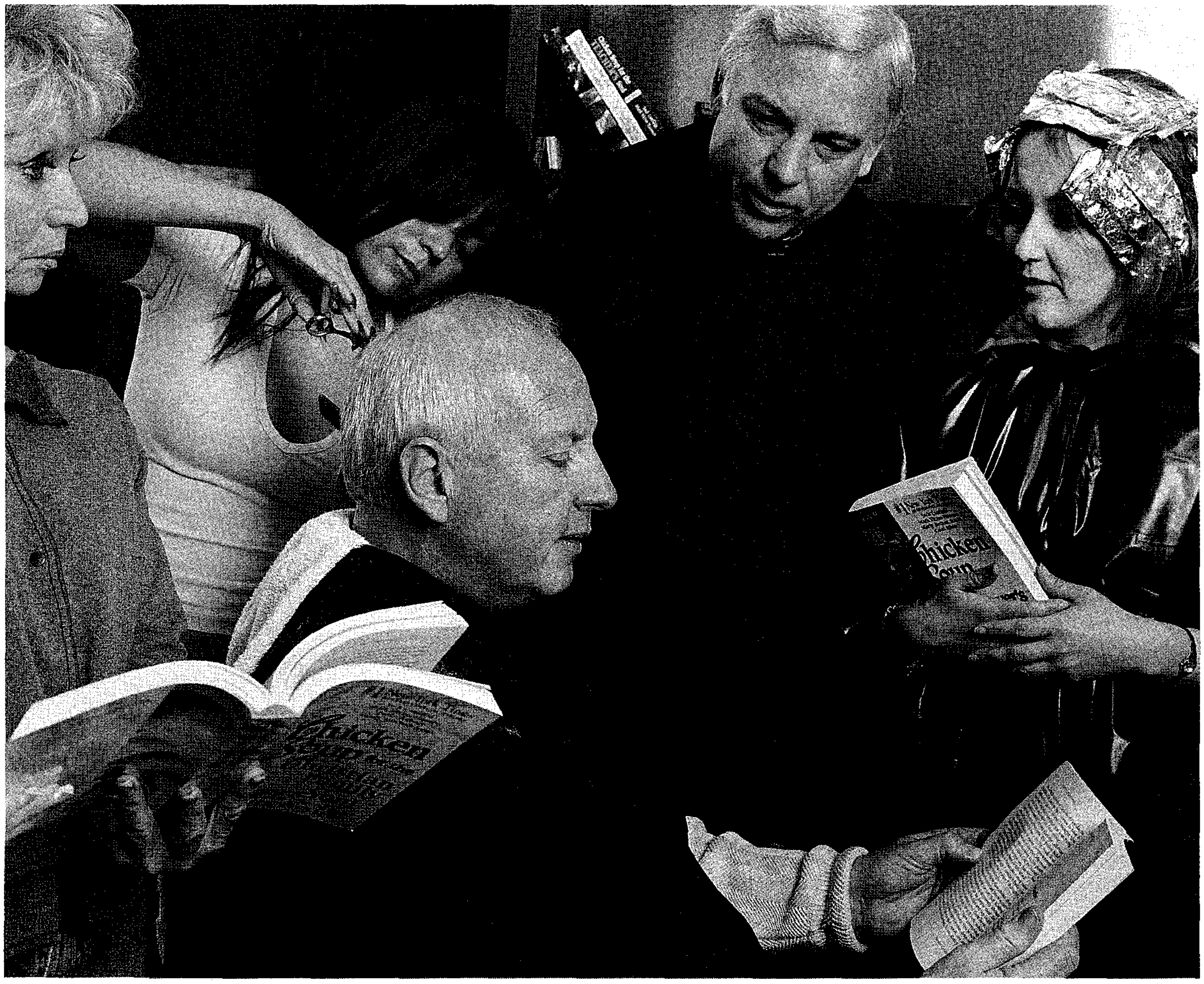
CHICKEN-SOUP NATION

The art of turning heartwarming stories into cold cash.

BY CYNTHIA GORNEY

In the fall of 1991, one of the book proposals being shopped around New York was a big sheaf of materials from a young literary agent named Jeffrey Herman, who was specializing in popular business books. Herman had already represented some reasonably successful nonfiction—a book by one of his writers had sold more than two hundred thousand copies—and this new proposal was the most ambitious package he had ever seen, with a lengthy manuscript sample and a lot of exuberant marketing ideas, such as selling the books in venues like gas stations and Amway sales conventions. There were pledge forms on which people had written their names and phone numbers beneath a promise to buy the book. "I also promise to buy a copy for everyone who works with me," read the pledge forms, which referred to the nonexistent book as a best-seller, "for a total of ______ people."

A dozen publishers turned Herman down, and then a dozen more. Herman says that they were all polite but dismissive, and that the meetings he arranged for the prospective co-authors, two motivational speakers from Southern California, did not appear to be bolstering his case. "Big gold rings and major tans," Julie Merberg, who was then at Ballantine and now co-owns the book-packaging company Roundtable Press, recalls. "My boss at the time had more highbrow taste." The publisher Ron Fry, who owns a house called the Career Press, remembers exactly how big an advance the authors wanted—fifteen hundred dollars—and that he didn't think the book, an anthology of what were characterized as quick-read inspirational real-life stories, was worth it. "Kind of treacly," Fry recalls, adding sorrowfully, "Thank you *so* much for reminding me." For five months or so, Herman kept on sending the package off to houses of ever-diminishing size and stature, and when more than thirty had passed on it he



Mark Victor Hansen (seated) and Jack Canfield. Their first Chicken book "was like a chain letter." Photograph by Gail Albert-Halaban.

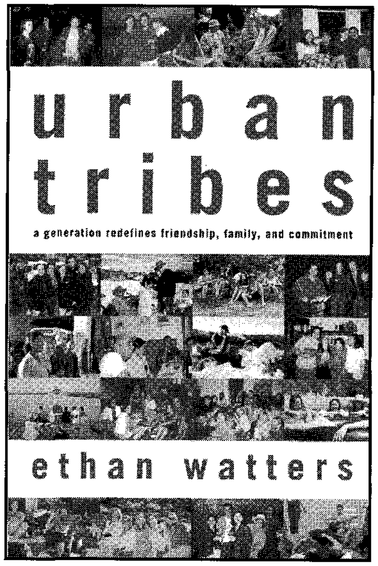
called the co-authors to tell them he was giving up. Perhaps they should self-publish, he said, or go on shopping without an agent.

The story continues with the co-authors driving to the American Booksellers Association meeting in Anaheim and walking all day from booth to booth, thrusting proposals into the hands of dubious sales representatives; and the publisher of a struggling Florida addiction-and-recovery-books company eventually volunteering to take a proposal home with him; and the publisher pulling out the proposal in an airport waiting lounge and reading about a judge who went around hugging people and a little boy who was kind and resourceful even though he had a crippled leg; and the publisher starting to cry right there in the airport, "tears running, blowing my nose, people looking at me kind of funny"; and the publisher deciding to give the writers a chance; and Jeff Herman feeling so bad finally about the tiny amount of proffered advance money that he waived the usual agent arrangement, which would have cut him in for fifteen per cent of everything then and for the duration of the relationship, and agreed to look over the contract as a courtesy. When I asked Herman whether he had ever figured out what that fifteen per cent might have added up to, he said quickly and firmly, "No. I'm not that much of a masochist."

Because this is the creation narrative of the "Chicken Soup for the Soul" series, which has become one of the biggest-selling nonfiction franchises in the history of American publishing, it may be worth noting the qualities that make it the right sort of material for a Chicken Soup book. It's short, or at least condensable, so that it could be read in its entirety by someone without much available time or attention—in the bathroom, say, or in the car-pool pickup line. It's uplifting. It involves obstacles overcome and dreams undeterred. It expresses a touch of satisfactory populist revenge while avoiding both social controversy and bad words. It's true, pretty much, although some of the details wobble in the verification process (memories differ, for example, about whether the exuberant marketing plan was written into the proposal or on hundreds of Post-it notes stuck to a wall in the authors' office). It contains elements of humor, surprise, or grief—actually, it contains all three, if you consider the situation from Jeff Herman's point of view—and it lends itself nicely to what is generally referred to, around the Chicken Soup headquarters, as a Moment. "A Chicken Soup Moment," Kathy Brennan-Thompson, one of the efficient young employees at the company's editorial office, in Santa Barbara, told me as she waited for her computer to begin displaying the hundreds of weekend Internet dispatches from people eager to contribute their own uplifting real-life stories to a "Chicken Soup for the Soul" book. "Something in there that touches you, inspires you, gives you goose bumps. That's what we look for."

The cumulative numbers for "Chicken Soup for the Soul," as the original book recently marked its tenth anniversary, this past summer, are enough to give most writers vertigo. If all the published Chicken titles are counted—there are seventy-odd, including not only "A 2nd Helping of Chicken Soup for the Soul," "Chicken Soup for the Couple's Soul," "Chicken Soup for the Golfer's Soul," "Chicken Soup for the Cat & Dog Lover's Soul," and so on, but also volumes like the "Chicken Soup for the Soul Teen Trilogy," which was assembled specifically for sale at Sam's Club—the domestic copies-in-print figures add up to approximately eighty million. People who walk into airport bookshops in search of a two-hour read may find themselves gazing at entire shelves full of nothing but Chicken Soup paperbacks, as though some bacterial growth had taken over a fifth of the inventory; in certain stores, the books have become their own category, as in Diet, or Buddhism. Anybody with a literate teen-ager has probably come within passing distance of a Chicken book. Three years ago, when my daughter was fourteen, I found her reading "Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul," a book that has sold six million copies so far, which positions it behind Chicken 1 (eight million) and just ahead of Woman's (five million).

None of those numbers take into account the foreign sales. The original Chicken book and various of its progeny have been translated into thirty-five languages, sometimes as "Broth for the



ARE FRIENDS THE NEW FAMILY?

"Playful without being ironic and meaningful without being sappy, *Urban Tribes* will be a seminal book."—**Po Bronson, author of *What Should I Do With My Life?***

"Ethan Watters has achieved the impossible. He's brought to life a fascinating social trend. And he's produced what might be the first work of cultural commentary that has a happy ending!" —**Daniel H. Pink, author of *Free Agent Nation***

"Watters's self-deprecating wit and intelligent, readable analysis make this foray into modern social commentary as smart and fast-moving as an episode of *Seinfeld*." —**Mary Roach, author of *Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers***

"The book comes from such heartfelt questions on his part, including some of the barest questions anyone can ask: Is my life worth anything? Am I wasting my time? I raced through this, eager and curious to see what answers he'd find." —**Ira Glass, host of *This American Life***

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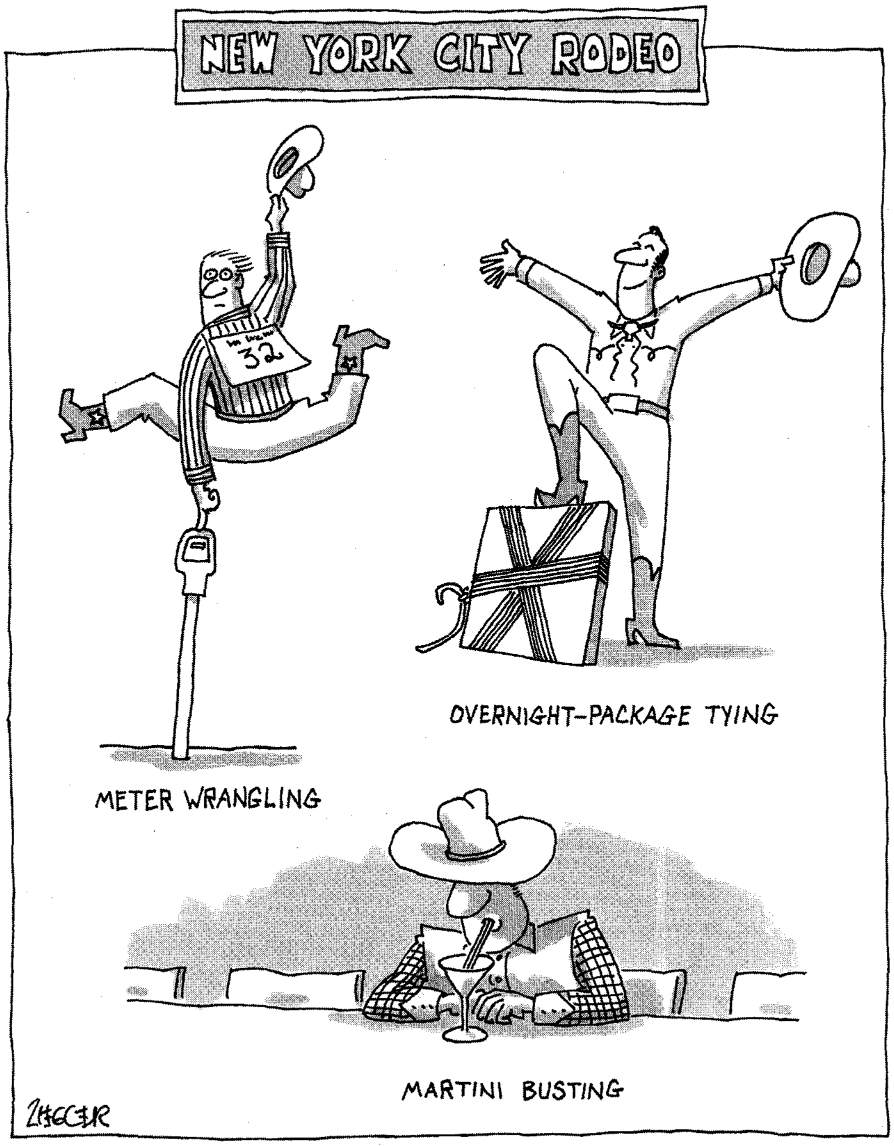

Soul," or "Vitamins for the Soul"; in Indonesia the title translates, briskly, as "Become 'Rich' and Happy." The books have given rise to imitators, and television writers casting about for a moment of comic class identification will occasionally drop a Chicken Soup book into the script. There's a "Sopranos" episode in which one of Tony's Russian popsies rolls off him and returns to her bedside reading. "What is that?" Tony asks. " 'Chicken Soup for the Soul,' " she replies.

• •

The Chicken Soup enterprise has demolished nearly every publishing truism placed in its path—that anthologies don't sell, that teen-agers don't buy books, that there is no market for plainly written short-form nonfiction by people nobody's ever heard of. At the editorial office, where seventy-five new Chicken Soup titles are currently somewhere in the proposal-to-printing pipeline, a cheerful shorthand pervades much of the conversation; because so much potential Chicken material comes from the readers themselves, some strenuous organizational effort is called for at the front end of the production line. One morning, I watched a twenty-one-year-old receptionist named Kristen Allred as she sliced open envelopes with a letter opener, scanned the contents, and wrote swiftly in red ink across the top. "Grieving," Allred scrawled on one sheet of lined binder paper, thereby directing it to the "Chicken Soup for the Grieving Soul" file; and "Romantic" across another. "Pet Lovers." "Teachers." "Handicapped." "Everyday Hero."

Allred looked as sober and intent as a triage nurse. Near her feet, the big crate from the morning's post-office pickup was still nearly full. The submissions that arrive by mail tend to be written by hand, sometimes on pages ripped from spiral notebooks, and often with the tremulous depth of feeling of a person accepting for the first time a serious invitation to tell a personal story to an audience of strangers. Within the crate, for example, was a four-page account from a woman in Wayne, West Virginia, who had been feuding with her pregnant sister until she touched her sister's stomach and felt the baby kick. There was a poem from a single mother of five in Nauvoo, Alabama, who wrote that she had been moved to compose it after all the neighboring towns were demolished in a tornado; and a memoir from Portland, Oregon, that began, "I'll never forget him, the 'dream,' walking down the third-grade hallway as he went to class."

A sixty-eight-year-old woman in West Union, Illinois, had written about the death of her mother, with all the significant words capitalized, as though German were her first language. A man in Bayside, New York, had written about hitting his only home run. A man in Bremerton, Washington, had written about his love affair with a young Okinawan woman who never told him that she was dying of leukemia; a woman in New Bedford, Massachusetts, about the important thing that happened to her son at a church Christmas bazaar; a woman in Des Moines, Iowa, about choosing fabric for the quilt she made after her boyfriend was killed in a car accident. "Some of them don't seem to care if they get published," Allred said. "They just want an outlet. They'll say, 'Please please *please* put my name in the book,' but after a while they're saying, 'Hey. Thanks for reading this.' "

A list of crisis-intervention telephone numbers, like the National Child Abuse Hotline, was affixed by Velcro to the wall over Allred's desk. Above that was a short prayer to God, and beside that the latest in-house best-seller-list tracking report; evidently, the month had been merely O.K., with only one "Soup" on the New York *Times* list—"Chicken Soup for the Sister's Soul," which had

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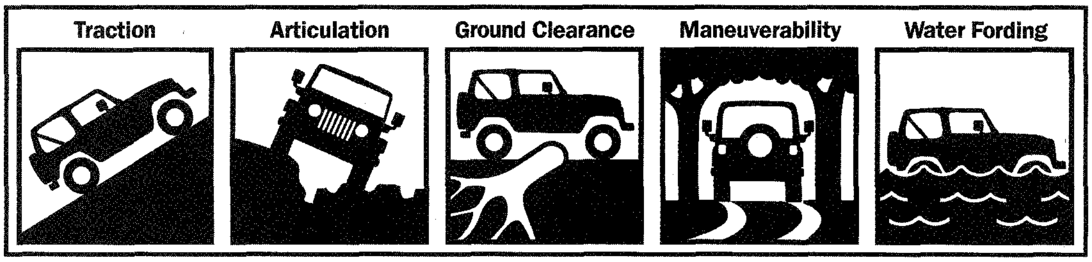
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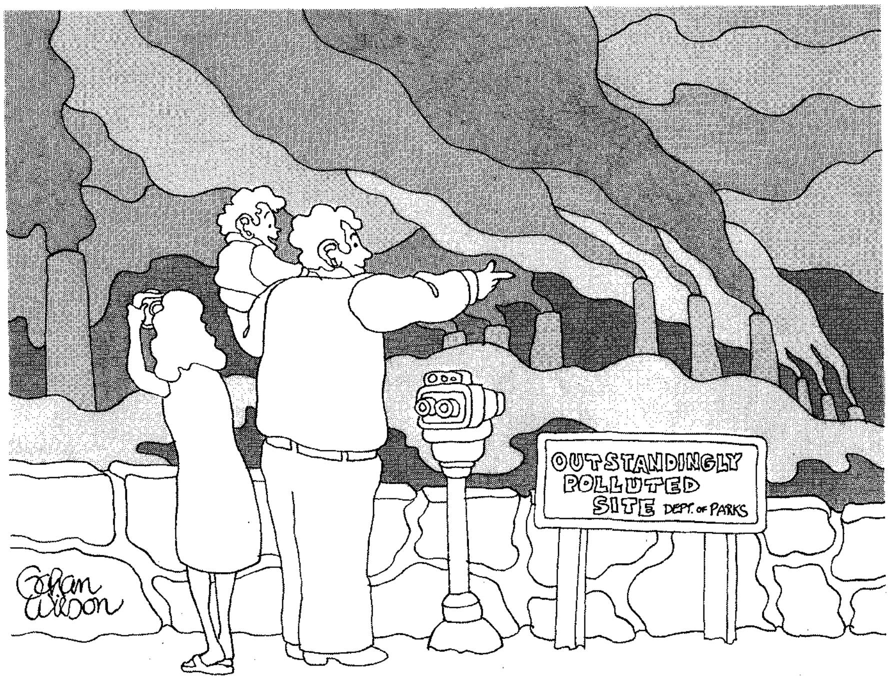
débuted at No. 5, two weeks after publication—instead of two or three. The receptionist's alcove seemed an unsettling intersection of private anguish and public performance, like a combination confessional and karaoke bar, and for a while Allred let me stand beside her and help open envelopes from the mail crate. When I told her that an eleven-year-old named Brittany was asking whether dogs go to Heaven, owing to the recent death of her mother's pet, Kristen groaned, looking momentarily overwhelmed, and put her head in her hands. "I think we better field that one to Jack," she said.

Jack Canfield's name, along with that of his business partner, Mark Victor Hansen, appears on the cover of every Chicken Soup book. Both men still live in Southern California, about three hours' drive apart—Hansen in a coastal suburb south of Los Angeles, and Canfield in Santa Barbara, in a house separated by a long, narrow swimming pool from the Chicken Soup editorial office. The first time I talked to Canfield, he was moping about the sales of "Chicken Soup for the Country Soul," which had disappointed them all by moving only about five hundred thousand copies so far. " 'Country Soul' just didn't rock," Canfield said, sounding wistful. He had higher hopes for "Chicken Soup for the NASCAR Soul," now available for purchase alongside other NASCAR-endorsed products, like the D. Earnhardt, Jr., Shower Curtain. "If you had told me two years ago that we were going to do a NASCAR book, I'd have laughed you out of the room," Canfield said. "But you should see these stories. Humor! Overcoming obstacles and odds! People being injured and coming back! The amount of money to put a car on the track, the entrepreneurial spirit, the philanthropic activities these guys support."

We were sitting outside, at a teak table by the pool; behind us was the remodelled guest villa in which the Chicken editorial staff works, and beyond the pool deck was Canfield's residence, a big eggshell-colored house with a Spanish Colonial red tiled roof. The grounds were thick with bougainvillea and blooming orchids. Canfield's wife, whom he married recently (he has been divorced twice), keeps horses on the property, at the bottom of a wooded ravine that Canfield can see from his study if he pushes the button on his desk which electronically parts the curtains. (The only time I saw him do this, he glanced up with a look of embarrassed delight, like a teen-ager caught playing with his baby brother's toys, and told me the remote-control drapes had been there when he bought the house. That was eight years ago, after "Chicken Soup for the Soul" had sold its first six million copies; before that, Canfield's home and rented office were situated in much less desirable Zip Codes in Los Angeles.)

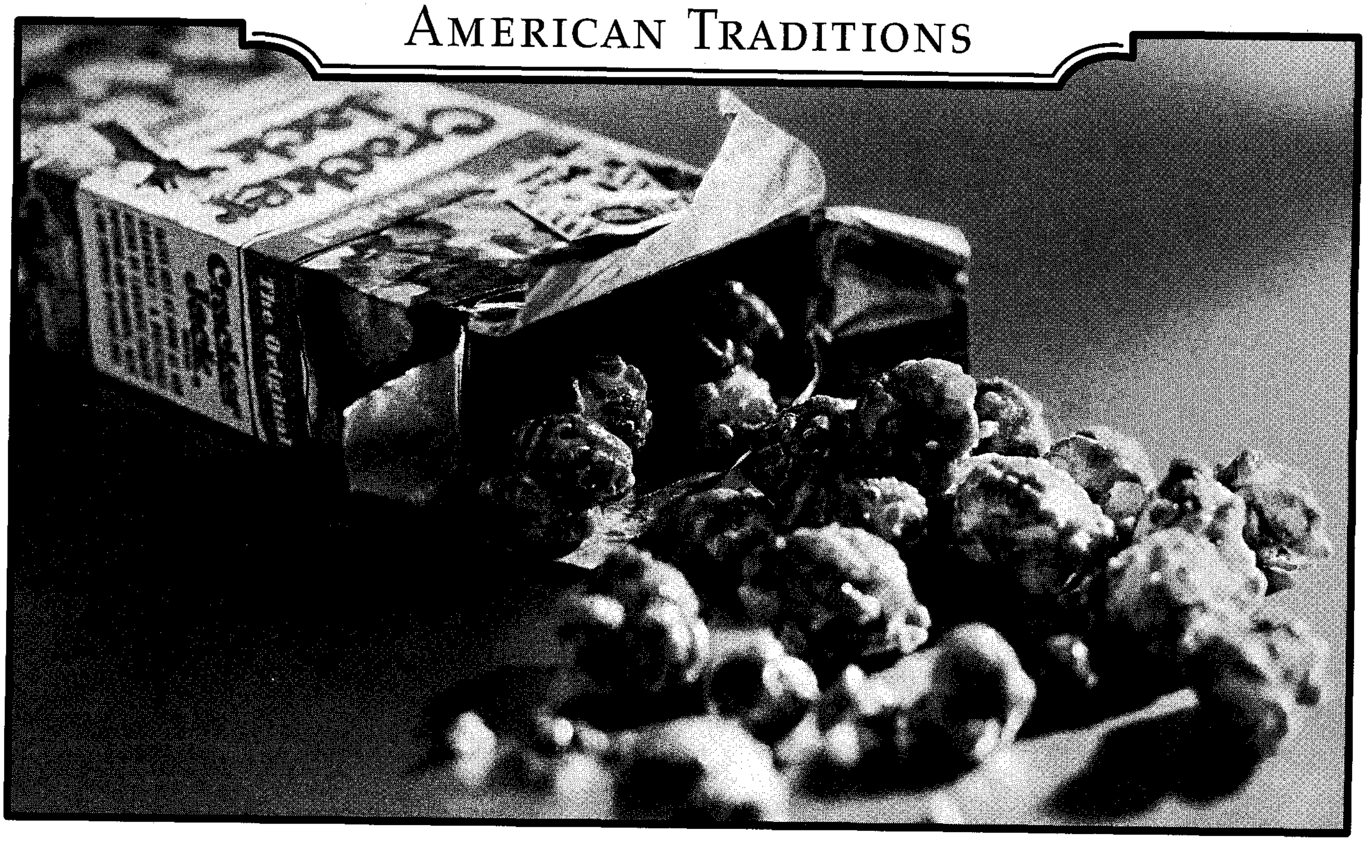


People in publishing tend to ricochet between disdain and covetous admiration when they talk about the Chicken Soup books, but there is general agreement that Canfield and Hansen, as managers of their own material—as promoters, as oddsmakers willing to envision book-buying audiences not readily apparent to others—have turned out to be prodigies. "A lot of authors *say* they will do whatever they can to make a book sell," said Leslie Meredith, who is a senior editor at Free Press, a division of Simon & Schuster, and has many years of experience with popular-psychology and spirituality books. "These guys were brilliant. They were unstoppable forces at marketing themselves and their books."

The original Chicken book was conceived during the late nineteen-eighties, when Canfield was conducting motivational workshops around the United States. He is a Harvard graduate with a master's degree in psychology. During his pre-Chicken years, he taught high school, co-founded a humanistic-psychology center in Massachusetts, and co-wrote a teachers' workbook on improving schoolchildren's self-esteem. Most recently, Canfield had set up his own company, Self-Esteem Seminars, and during his workshops he liked to tell stories. He was excellent at this. His stories were instructive, quick, and intended for people who felt unloved or inadequate or stomped on by circumstance; some were exemplary, like the three-minute biography of the paraplegic burn victim who was elected mayor of his town, and some were parables, like the one about the guy walking around at low tide throwing beached starfish back into the sea (moral: it may look futile, but it makes a difference to each rescued starfish).

When people began asking him for copies of his stories, Canfield has said, it occurred to him to try compiling the best of them into a single volume. "He said, 'I'm doing a book on all the stories that get standing ovations,' " Mark Victor Hansen told me. Canfield and Hansen had met through the motivational speakers' circuit, where they had occasionally sat in on each other's

AMERICAN TRADITIONS



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seminars; Hansen specialized in revving up sales conventions and urging audiences to, in the phrasing of his current home page, think *bigger*, want *more*, and achieve *all* their dreams at *any* age. "So I said, 'Hey, I taught you how to get people to cry at the end of your talks,' " Hansen recalled. "I said, 'Let's do the book together.' And he said, 'Why?' And I said, 'Well, I've got a lot of great stories you don't know.' "

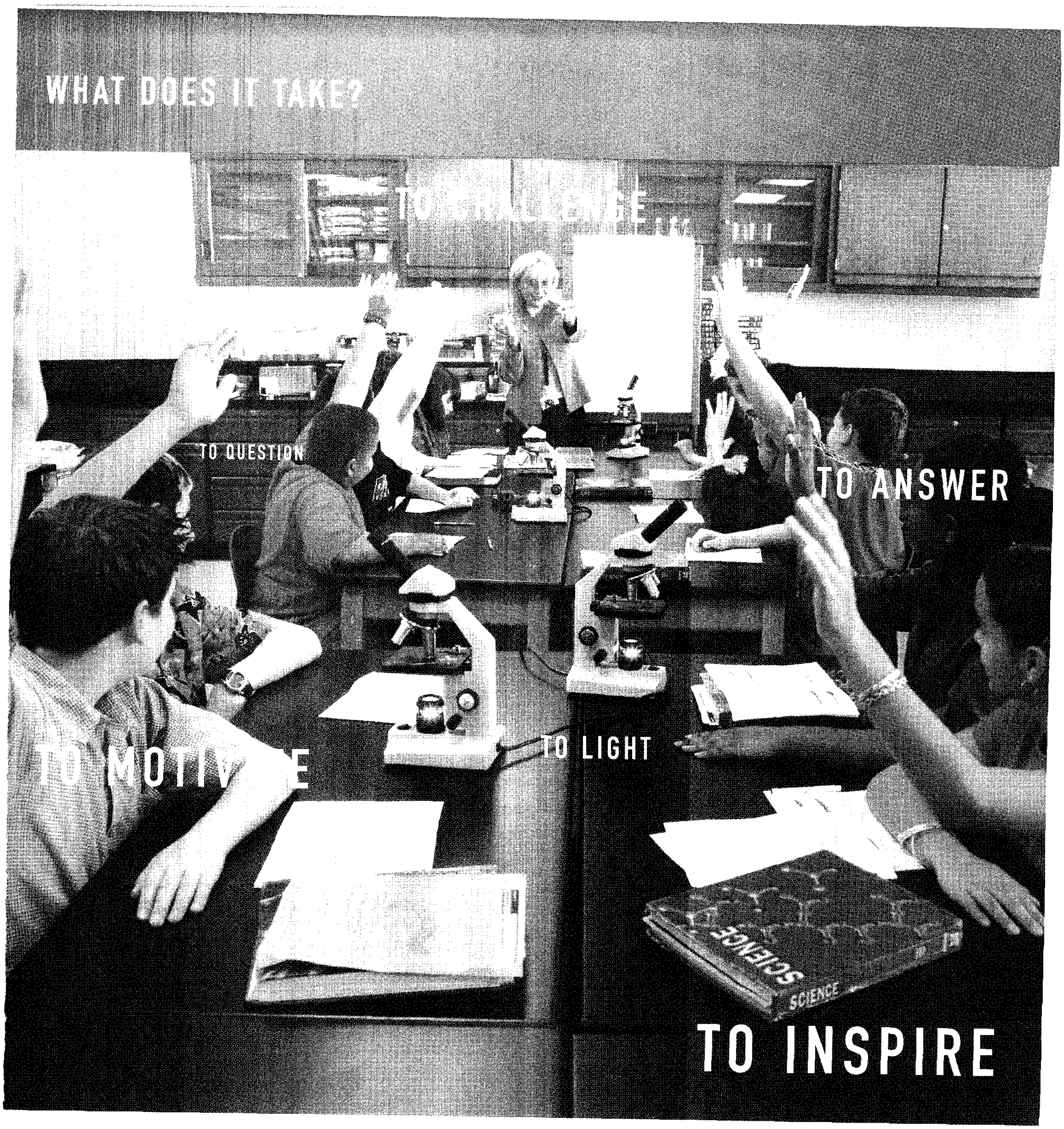
How much of this account is literally true is anybody's guess. An extended telephone conversation with Mark Victor Hansen is a mysterious experience; on his office's "hold" recording, which appears to commence midsentence, his voice cries, "Aromatically wonderful! And you are the king of the hill, or the queen of the hill! And that's what we're going to give you now, is *instant success*, so you can come to the penultimate of your life!" (When I asked Hansen what "aromatically wonderful" meant, he replied, patiently, "It means it smells good.") He speaks in a rapid, rolling cadence, mixing vigorous aphorisms and autobiographical information in a way that suggests some indifference to the distinctions. He told me that he had worked with Buckminster Fuller while completing a Southern Illinois University master's degree in a Fuller-influenced field called Comprehensive Anticipatory Design Science, and that he and Canfield interviewed a hundred and one famous nonfiction authors to find out everything they knew about making a book a best-seller. He believes that the Chicken Soup series will eventually sell a billion books. He said, "Remember, I write the business plans for the Mark-and-Jack team! I think I'm the best business-plan writer on the planet!"

Some of these declarations contain confirmable elements: Hansen did graduate from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, but the school has records only of a B.A. in speech communications, in 1970, and many years later an honorary doctorate. Canfield recalls that he and Hansen did go for advice to best-selling authors, but only about ten of them. "We have a term here: Mark Math," Canfield told me. "If you take a zero off it, it's probably accurate."

Canfield said this in a way that sounded at once affectionate and appreciative, as though Hansen's imagination were too valuable a commodity to be constrained by precision, and there is no dispute about the fervor with which both men drove themselves to sell their book. Health Communications, the Florida house that finally published "Chicken Soup for the Soul," ran off a first printing of twenty thousand copies, half of which Canfield and Hansen had agreed to buy outright and resell on their own. They already owed huge sums in permissions fees, since much of their anthologized material had been previously published; Patty Aubery, a young San Diego State University dropout who had gone to work for Canfield, was juggling toner and copy-machine bills, staving off creditors. Around the small rental office, as cartons of books began piling up on the floor, scary book-selling numbers were recited frequently and urgently: sixty thousand new titles released in this country every year (true, and the count is higher today); only one out of seven American adults ever walks into a bookstore to contemplate buying a book.

Nobody recalls now where this second gloomy statistic might have come from, but it was helpful as a motivational prod. Waving their book around in front of people who don't walk into bookstores became a three-year obsession for Canfield and Hansen: they hawked books at their seminars; they did Kiwanis and PTA meetings; they got up at four in the morning for ten-minute drive-time interviews on small radio stations in the Midwest. They sent Aubery to flea markets, where she would sit on cartons of Chicken books and implore passersby to listen for a minute while she just read them this one really good story. Aubery had long acrylic fingernails in those days, and she would carry stacks of Chicken Soup books into nail salons and ask the manicurists if they would mind displaying them for sale on consignment. "Gas stations, bagel shops," Aubery told me. "Everywhere we looked: 'Could a book go here?' We might be in a small convenience store. 'If I brought these books in, would you carry them?' "

In September, 1994, sixteen months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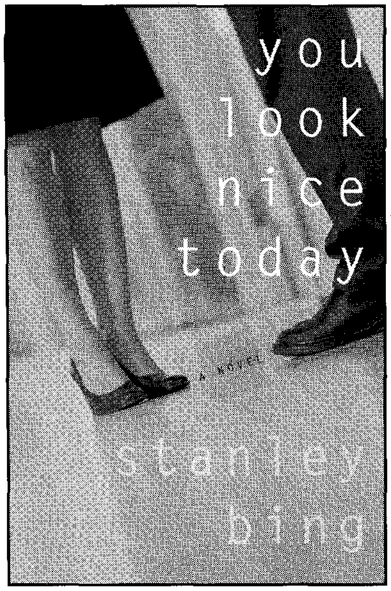

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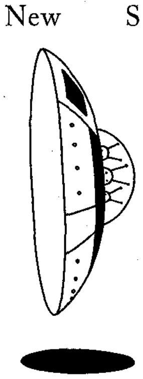
after its initial release, "Chicken Soup for the Soul" made the *Times* best-seller list. Canfield says he saw what was going to happen when he learned that people were buying three or four copies at a time, and that orders surged at Mother's Day and Christmas. "It was like a chain letter," he told me. "Ten people read it, and they told ten people about it."

People who like "Chicken Soup for the Soul" books often keep a few volumes around the house, and make the process of turning to a Chicken book—a sudden rush of loneliness, or a sagging of resolve, and then the thumbing of the pages until some small reassurance settles in—sound like stepping out back for a minute to confide in the sensible neighbor across the fence. I had a neighbor like that once, but both of us understood what a mythic, unusual luxury it was, being able to fling open the screen door and yell over the blackberry vine when one of us needed cheering up. Books that come under the heading of "inspiration" or "self-help" have grown enormously in popularity in recent years, but that is not quite what a Chicken book is; each of these volumes is a collection, written by scores of different people, some of whom have never published anything before, some of whom had never really written anything before, until a "Chicken Soup for the Soul" book gave them the idea to do it.

"Never," the woman from New Bedford, Massachusetts, told me when I called to ask her about the story she had sent in while I was visiting the editorial offices. "I've never even written a letter to the newspaper." Her name is Beth Bernier-Kilanowich, she is a program director in a county sheriff's office, and her submission was an account of the lesson her son had managed to extract from a disappointing moment at the Christmas bazaar. (He got a Barbie instead of the prize he wanted, and gave it back after he figured out that this must be God's way of routing it to some little girl.) Bernier-Kilanowich talked about the Chicken books as though they provided her with a place that was crowded not only with people like herself but also with schoolteachers, firefighters, ministers, attorneys, adventurers, veterinarians, grandmothers, athletes, accountants, prisoners, and survivors of every imaginable infirmity—"your average person," she said. When I asked her why the church bazaar was the thing she had chosen to write about, she was quiet for a moment. Then she said that while she was listening to her son tell her about the doll she had also been staring at him, and feeling one of those unbearable parental presentiments of loss, and that she had seen what the retelling of this incident might do to keep it in a certain way intact. "I said, 'You know what, I'm writing this for myself,' " she said finally. "So I would always remember it, and not forget any of the details."

The drive to package human experience in this way is powerful and seems to be universal, but Canfield and Hansen had no idea what they were setting off when they decided, a decade ago, to use a blank page in their anthology as an invitation to readers to send in submissions of their own. "Share your heart with the rest of the world" was how the invitation began. As it happens, very few places exist these days in which an ordinary person without a literary agent might hope to share her heart with the rest of the world. There are a few magazines that publish first-person accounts, and there is of course the Internet, which was still on training wheels when the first Chicken book came out.



Some of the things that a nascent essayist like Beth Bernier-Kilanowich might have found wanting in the early Internet, though—permanence, tangibility, the idea that your sentences might end up on someone's kitchen counter or bedside table—are still missing, a decade later. Even the generation raised on "R U OK" chatspeak and gut-spilling online postings seems to have a special atavistic feeling about the gravity of being published in a bound volume. "Imagine, your friend goes into a store and picks up a book," a Los Angeles seventeen-year-old named Brie Gorlinsky told me. "And *there's your name in it.*"

The day I met Brie, she was working an afternoon shift as one of the front-line readers in the three-room of-

CURRENT TRENDS IN CORPORATE TRAVEL

BY BRET LEWIS

To seal the deal, business travellers seek luxe amenities such as those afforded by The Fairmont Olympic Hotel in Seattle.

COURTESY OF THE FAIRMONT OLYMPIC IN SEATTLE

Corporate travel managers are facing a new set of challenges. In a business travel environment that is ever-consolidating, steadily globalizing, and increasingly reliant on automation and electronic tools, long-standing suppliers are fighting for survival, and start-up companies are turning older models upside down. The financial crises at major U.S. airlines have taken their toll, and a slow economy and expanding business travel options are changing the way companies negotiate travel contracts and manage travel services. But embedded in the industry turmoil of the past two years are new opportunities for travel managers to better serve corporate travellers and lower overall corporate travel expenses.

Indeed, today's travel market presents business managers with a world of promising new technologies. Corporate travel departments have more support from senior management keen on cost containment. The economic crunch has also supplied travel managers with fresh ammunition to fight territorial battles previously not worth waging. Many now aim to dictate travel policies and take over the planning functions for corporate meetings.

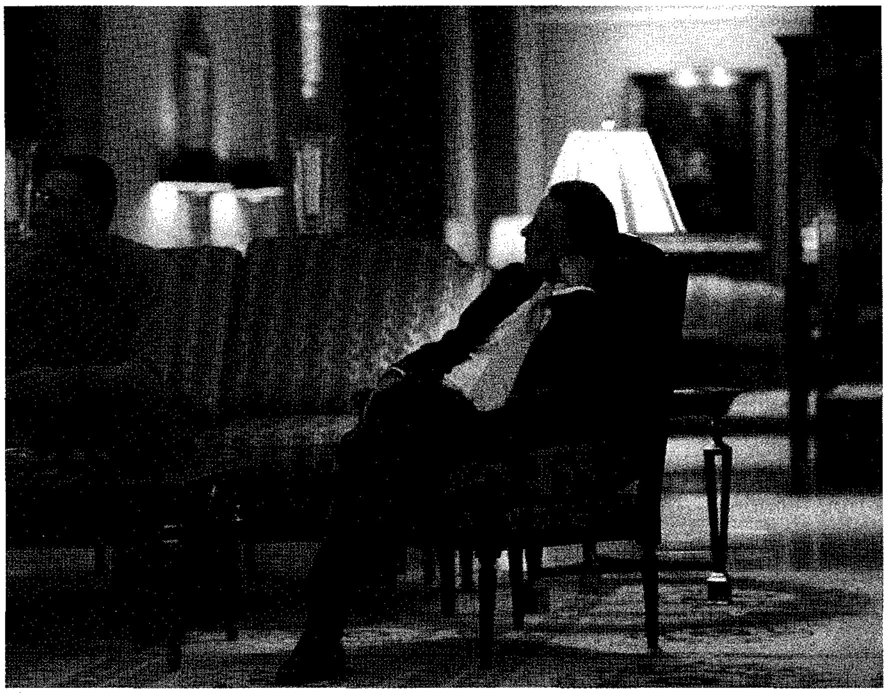
The current business travel environment also demands attention to traveller safety and health concerns. Extensive data from booking agencies must be consolidated, managed properly, and kept private.

Travel management professionals are taking on numerous additional duties and responsibilities. According to a 2003 survey by *Business Travel News* and the Institute of Business Travel Management, 72 per cent of 573 respondents are overseeing corporate online booking systems (up from 46 per cent in 2000); 65 per cent are directing corporate intranet travel sites (up from 47 per cent); and 30 per cent are managing electronic expense-reporting systems (up from 16 per cent). In growing numbers, travel managers are also dealing with everything from airport parking to cell phone contracts.

In most cases, large corporate travel programs are still best served by traditional travel management companies. However, agencies are under increasing pressure to meet the lower fees charged by InterActiveCorp.'s Expedia, airline-owned Orbitz, and Sabre's Travelocity, three Internet booking sites that are positioning themselves to provide services for the corporate market. Meanwhile, electronic corporate-booking systems such as Sabre's GetThere, Amadeus' e-Travel, and TRX's ResAssist already permit business travellers to make their own reservations with vendors that the travellers' companies have negotiated volume- and market share-based discounts with. These corporate booking tools can also tie in directly to a firm's system of electronic expense reporting and payment, human resources, and finance systems.

Travel managers' relationships with suppliers—such as the airlines—have been dramatically affected by the business-travel downturn. The situation has been particularly difficult with U.S. airlines facing Chapter 11 filings, bankruptcy proceedings, and court-supervised restructuring. "There are a number of external and internal factors that we have to manage aggressively," says Northwest Airlines' CEO Richard Anderson. "We, the legacy carriers, are continuing the obligation to restructure our costs."

Far from achieving that goal, and still hurting on the revenue side, the airlines are hungrier than ever for corporate travel dollars. Their big corporate clients, at the same time, have reduced travel spending substantially, leaving neither side with much negotiating leverage. In an effort to reduce the amount spent on flights—which typically accounts for about forty cents of every business-travel dollar—travel managers are instructing travellers, whether they're booking through traditional travel agencies or online, to obtain the lowest logical airfares. In many cases, the lowest airfares still require an advance purchase, a Saturday night stay, and/or connecting flights. Though the disparity between refundable and nonrefundable fares isn't as extreme as it once was, many airlines still charge double or triple the booked-in-advance price for a last-minute reservation.



The InterContinental The Barclay's lounge in New York offers a relaxed environment for its corporate guests.

This year continues to be a buyer's market for hotel rooms, a cost that accounts for about twenty-five per cent of corporate travel expenditures. Some buyers are defying tradition by striking multiyear contracts, or negotiating throughout the year rather than during a standard negotiating season. Many companies have traded down and consolidated the number of properties with which they negotiate deals. They've also increased their use of alternative lodging, such as corporate apartments, and demanded value add-ons like high-speed Internet access.

Like the airlines, hoteliers are grappling with Web rates and Internet sites that threaten to undercut or call into question the whole premise of negotiated rates. Trey Urbahn, CEO of FareChase, a company that provides software to search multiple Web sites for fares and rates, says, "You don't know where you are going to find the best price, and it's not just a supplier issue. There are many intermediaries that add variables in pricing. The same technology solutions you are seeing in air travel need to be applied to the hotel market."

As 2003 progresses, hotel chains are anticipating rebounding occupancy rates and stronger revenues. While this bodes well for the hotel industry, it portends tougher negotiations for corporate buyers. Favorable pricing for consumers is more easily secured in the car-rental realm, where stiff competition among the key players keeps rates down. At the same time, corporate buyers are looking at the cheaper car-rental alternatives increasingly available at airports. More corporations are also negotiating contracts for black car sedan services—enhanced in recent years because of the new reservations technologies—and incorporating them into managed travel programs.

Meanwhile, there is a trend by corporate decision-makers to centralize meeting planning and integrate it with travel management. Formerly handled primarily by nonprofessional planners, such as members of the individual business units or administrative assistants, the professional management of meetings represents a new frontier for travel managers to extend their reach, leverage their expertise, and promote cost-containment initiatives.

Despite these developments, travel management professionals face a difficult road ahead, pockmarked with economic pitfalls, new methods of procurement, and travel safety concerns. And despite the economic stagnation, nearly a third of the 204 companies responding to a recent survey by the National Business Travel Association said their travel spending, after two years of general decline, is recovering.

Some question the need for traditional travel managers in an industry now defined by e-commerce, with sophisticated technological tools available at travellers' fingertips. Others continue to see an acute need. "As long as there is choice in the marketplace, you will want a managed program," says Maureen Reynolds, a senior vice president at WorldTravel BTI, a corporate-travel agency. "Business travel is a means to an end that is important to your company, and your travellers are both employees and important assets. Why wouldn't you want to manage all that?"

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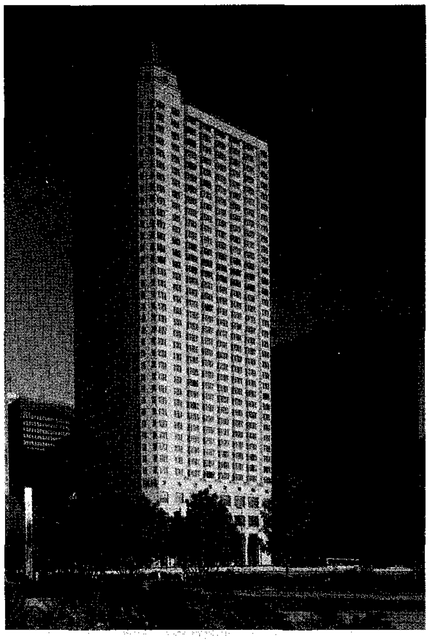

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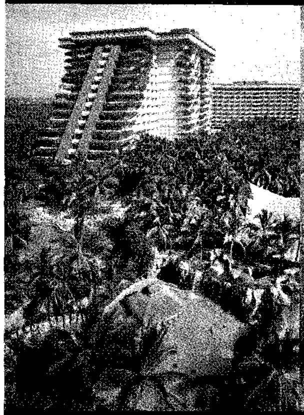
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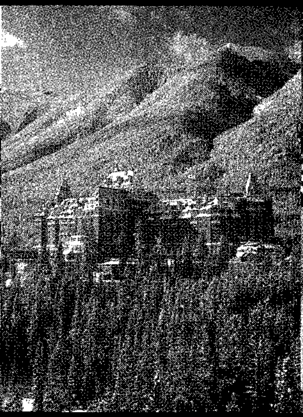
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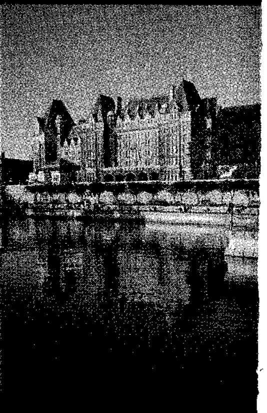
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Places in the heart.

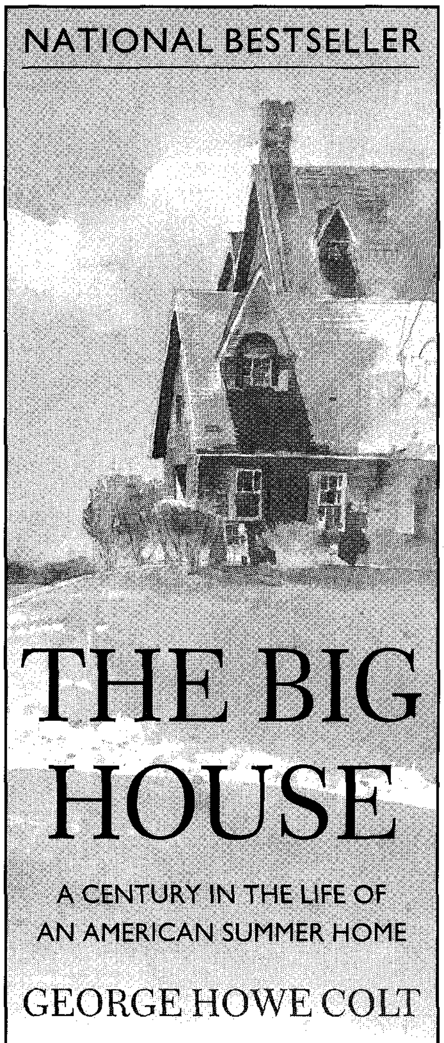
UNITED STATES CANADA MEXICO BARBADOS BERMUDA UNITED ARAB EMIRATES fice in which the teen-ager Chicken books are edited. This is in L.A., where Jack Canfield's younger sister, Kim Kirberger, lives. The idea of assembling a teen-agers' Chicken book occurred to Kirberger in 1995, when Canfield and Hansen were working on sequels and their office fax machine and mail deliveries were dumping several hundred sharings of the heart onto their desks every day. It was as though they had tapped accidentally into one of those fragile places in a mineshaft wall, and Kirberger, who had a preteen son as well as a keen instinct about the private torments of adolescence, talked her brother into letting her channel some of that loneliness, tribulation, and pent-up storytelling into a volume called "Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul." Within a few years, the teen-ager books had become a Chicken sub-industry of their own—they have sold more than eleven million copies—and Brie is one of the students Kirberger has hired to perform sifting and editorial duties, which Brie does with a practiced, unsentimental eye. The afternoon I stopped by, she was frowning at a computer screen, reading one of the three hundred and thirty-four submissions queued up that day for "Teenage Soul" editors' perusal. "This girl has an idea here, but she ends it with 'I never wanted to leave,' " Brie said, with evident irritation. "This doesn't give me enough."

Brie zapped the story into a "Thanks for your submission" file, and a new page of text filled the screen. I began reading over her shoulder, trying to digest opening passages as quickly as she did: "Some people say that your first love is the best experience that you can have, and in my case it was." Zap. "You are a princess, in your muddy, disillusioned world." Zap. "I miss you. I want to hold you forever." Zap. There was quite a bit of poetry, and when Brie came to one that began, "What if this is my only chance / to tell you how I feel," I thought she was going to zap that one, too, but she stopped and read the whole poem twice. "This is something more people can relate to," she said. "What if you have a crush on somebody, and you never get to talk to that person?"

When I asked Brie how she kept from succumbing under the weight of all that emotion—this office also had a mail crate filled to the brim, all the Ashleys and Jennifers and Amandas and Taras printing their return addresses with little stickers and hearts—she looked at me coolly, her fingers still hovering over the computer keyboard. "I have bunnies," she said. "They're staying at Kim's house until I can convince my dad to let me take care of them. So sometimes, when I get really sad over a story, I just go play with my bunnies."

There are middle- and high-school teachers all over the country who use the prospect of Chicken Soup publication to fire up their English Comp students, often over the objections of appalled colleagues who regard the books not only as treacly but also as pandering to the MTV attention span. Both observations are true, but beside the point. For some of these kids, "Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul" will have been the first book they ever read solely because they wanted to. They may indeed be reading as though by channel changer, but any adult with a decent recall of adolescence can imagine how it must feel to hang off the end of the bed late at night with a paperback full of nothing but the storytelling voices of people just like you—or, better still, people who probably look like you but seem to be even *more* geeky and uncertain and heartbroken and depressed, and yet here they are, having pulled through to tell you what happened to them.

That they have pulled through is crucial to the whole endeavor. Nobody in a Chicken book rekindles the spirit by coming out of the closet, or leading a union organizing drive, or deciding to have an abortion. The books are not overtly Christian, except for the ones that are: there is a "Christian Soul" and a recently published "Christian Teen Soul" (there's a "Jewish Soul," too, with blurbs from various rabbis and from Alan Dershowitz). Nonetheless, a steady moral code permeates the Chicken series; by the time the thousands of submissions have been culled to the hundred or so stories that make up every volume, a reader can count on what's left to provide stirring demonstrations of the way any adversity can be overcome by the right combination of individual will, spiritual faith, patriot-



"Colt remembers...the childhood bliss of long summer days, the sea at his feet, cousins at his side, cadres of indulgent, god-like adults watching his back."
—*The New York Times Book Review*

"Brings engagingly and memorably to life the house and the people who inhabited it, and it pays quiet tribute to the bygone WASP upper class and the values it held dear."
—*The Washington Post*

"Colt's account, like the house that lies at its center, is full of surprises and contains more than seems humanly possible." —*The New Yorker*

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—David Halberstam

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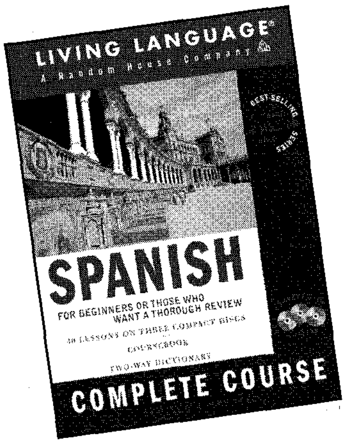

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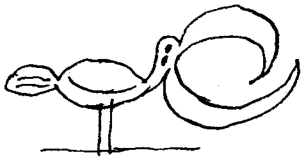
Every time I asked one of the Chicken people whether there was perhaps something dishonest about this approach, the look on their faces suggested a fabulously successful preacher reacting to a proposal that he begin delivering sermons about the triumph of despair. "Changing the world one story at a time$^{\text{TM}}$" is the "Chicken Soup for the Soul" motto, and accepting this philosophy is one of the prerequisites for acceptance as a "co-author," one of the several dozen outsiders who come up with new title ideas, solicit and read through submissions, and troll books and magazines in search of appropriate reprint material. Each Chicken volume is a financial collaboration, with the royalties distributed among Canfield, Hansen, and the co-authors. It's a lot of work at the front end, and the abundance of plausible-sounding affinity groups is starting to cause some anxiety at Chicken Soup, as new volumes continue to crowd the bookcases and become one another's chief competition. (What is to be done, some months from now, when the bookstore Chicken shelf is being perused by a NASCAR fan who is also Celtic, an Ocean Lover, a Romantic, a Working Woman, and Divorced?) It may also be a source of anxiety that no Chicken Soup title has been on the *Times* best-seller list since May.



The most gruelling Chicken job so far, everybody agrees, has been "Chicken Soup for the Grieving Soul," which was released in February. "We kept pushing back the publication date because it was so depressing," said Nancy Mitchell, Patty Aubery's younger sister, who works as one of the submissions readers for many Chicken books. Mitchell appears unflagging in her regard for Chicken correspondents; at times during "Grieving," though, the abundance of ordinary devastation was too much even for her, especially given the heroic efforts of many writers to redeem their misery in the requisite Chicken manner. "I have read *so many* stories about 'my son died, my father died, my grandfather died, and then I did see the rainbow,' " Mitchell said. "Or 'The tulips bloomed.' Or 'The yellow rose that didn't bloom for five years finally bloomed.' "

Around the Chicken offices, these are now referred to as M.F.G.s—Messages from the Grave—and when I was visiting the mention of M.F.G.s tended to lead to earnest but weirdly metaphysical conversations about truth. Truth is a big deal at "Chicken Soup for the Soul." Potential contributors sign a pledge that their submissions are "nonfiction," and there are guidelines about composing one's "inspirational, true story about ordinary people doing extraordinary things." But no follow-up definitions are offered—no admonitions about dramatic embellishment, complication erasure, and all the other forms of revisionism that most people employ in order to make their own stories mean what they want them to have meant. There's now a permissions department charged with tracking down identifiable characters in the stories to show in advance what's been written about them.

Nobody seems to place much stock in precision of detail, though—"I don't care if you turn your brother into Uncle Henry to save your brother's image in town," Canfield said—and in many respects the fact-checking department at Chicken Soup for the Soul Enterprises still resembles the one at my family's holiday gatherings, which is to say a roomful of opinionated, noisy, fast-talking people making continual recalibrations based on multiple levels of truth. How much of this story has been invented? How much does it matter? Is the invention in the details or in the narrative and instructional core? My father is the best storyteller in our family, and I was listening to him the other night at a birthday dinner with people he had just met. He was telling his favorite story about my teen-age years. The essence of the story is unassailably true, which is that it was alarming to be a parent when the young men at the door looked like cavemen, and as I watched my father from the far end of the table I thought fleetingly, as I sometimes do, of pointing out that he was conflating two separate boyfriend episodes with an old Woody Allen monologue. But he was delivering it with such gusto, and our new friends were laughing, and anyway it's his story to tell, not mine. ♦

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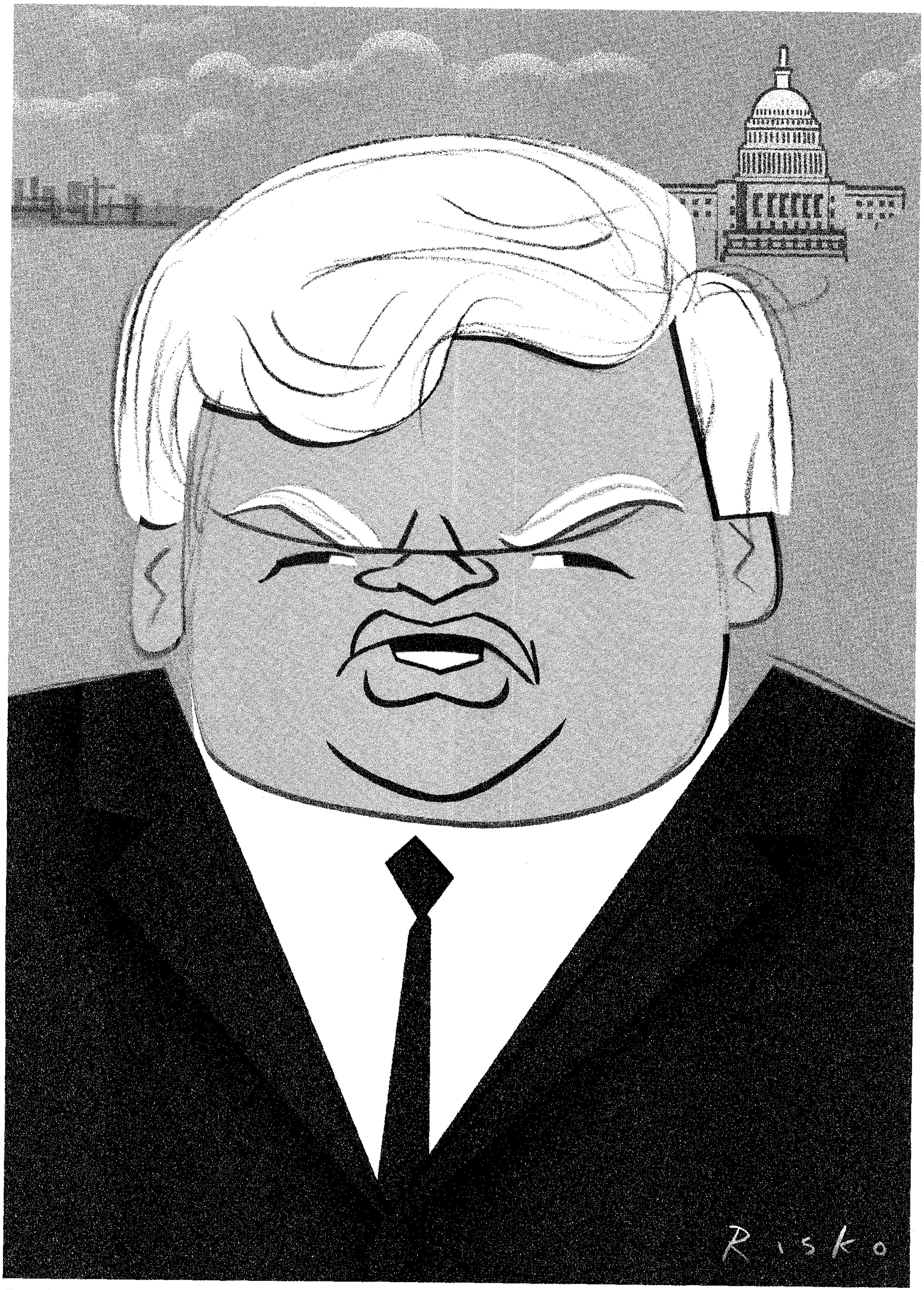


Dennis Hastert is described variously as weak, powerful, moderate, and right-wing. "With me, what you see is what you get," he says.

PROFILES

THE LISTENER

How did a former wrestling coach end up running the House of Representatives?

BY JONATHAN FRANZEN

In July, at the Petunia Festival Parade in Dixon, Illinois, on a street near Ronald Reagan's boyhood home, which is now a lovingly groomed national historic site, a parade-goer named John S. Allen threw a water balloon at an antique fire engine that a big white-haired guy was driving. The balloon hit the truck, not the big white-haired guy, and it's a safe bet that Allen, who was carrying marijuana and may have been a little clouded in his judgment, was surprised to find himself swarmed both by Dixon police and by plainclothes security men with wires in their ears. The day after the parade, in Lee County Circuit Court, Allen was charged with one count of aggravated battery—a felony—for attacking J. Dennis Hastert on a public street. The presiding judge asked Allen if he was acquainted with the name J. Dennis Hastert. Allen said he wasn't. "J. Dennis Hastert is the Speaker of the House of Representatives," the judge said. "He is third in line to the Presidency of the United States. You won't forget it next time, will you?"

"I had no idea who he was," Allen said to the judge. "It was just a water balloon."

It's hard not to feel sorry for Allen. J. Dennis Hastert, whose official biography lists "carving and painting duck decoys" as one of his hobbies, and whose most memorable quote on record is "I'm not saying I'm a humble person; I wouldn't blow my own horn on humility," is still sometimes referred to as the Accidental Speaker. Nearly half of the American electorate has never heard of him. You're most likely to have seen his beefy, squinting face partially cropped out of a picture of somebody more famous—George Bush on the House dais, say, looking surprised by the words of his own State of the Union address. If you've ever found yourself watching Hastert on TV, you've probably reached for the channel flipper. He speaks in a sticky downstate-Illinois monotone heavily punctuated with the phrase "you know," which, half swallowed, comes out as "yeah-oh." When he's under stress, he narrows his eyes so tightly that his pupils are barely visible.

Hastert's public persona, to the extent that he has one, is the Coach. He was a star wrestler in high school and college, and from 1964 to 1980 he coached wrestling and football and taught government and economics at Yorkville High School, in Yorkville, Illinois. Even before Reagan made "government" a dirty word, politicians lucky enough to have nonpolitical pasts were at pains to talk about them. In his fund-raising speeches nowadays, Hastert likes to tell how he visited a high-school principal to see if he might want the job himself. Outside the principal's office were half a dozen chairs that were filled with problematic students in the morning and with problematic teachers during lunch hour; the job consisted of listening to complaints all day. "I couldn't see myself doing that," Hastert says. "So I decided to be a state legislator." Later in the speech, he describes the Speaker's office in the Capitol. "It has a great big chandelier in it," he says. "Yeah-oh, I was a high-school wrestling coach. I never thought I'd have an office with a *chandelier*. But things have a way of coming full circle. Because right outside my office now there are seven or eight chairs. And they're full every day." He pauses for laughter. "They call me the Speaker, but, yeah-oh, they really ought to call me the Listener."

Because Hastert cultivates a low profile, and because he very rarely gives the media an entertaining quote, and because most Democrats on the Hill like him personally and prefer to attack the House Majority Leader, Tom DeLay, there's a widespread perception in Washington that DeLay is the real power in the House and that Hastert is, to put it charitably, his facilitator; uncharitably, his puppet. This view is disputed by the Illinois Democrats, who like the Speaker personally and depend on his support at home, and by most prominent Republicans, who like the Speaker personally and wouldn't want anyone to think that such a central player on their team isn't valuable.

"You're always better off to be underestimated," Nicholas Calio, President Bush's former congressional liaison, said of Hastert. "It's the same thing the Democrats do with Bush. They think he's dumb, dumb, dumb, and yet they keep getting beaten by him." Newt Gingrich, Hastert's predecessor, who described the Speaker as "an order of magnitude" more powerful than DeLay, offered this comparison: "I was the relentless, entrepreneurial, idea-oriented disrupter of the old order, and he is the organizer, codifier, and maintainer of the new order." When Gingrich assumed the Speakership, in 1995, the Republicans had a twenty-six-seat majority in the House; by the time he left, in 1998, the majority was down to twelve. Under Hastert, who was elected in part because he is so unlike Gingrich, the House Republicans have maintained their majority; their national approval rating, which had fallen to twenty-six per cent when Gingrich stepped down, has since climbed to past fifty per cent. "He's the reason we're still in the majority," Susan Hirschmann, DeLay's former chief of staff, said. "He is the *glue*."

Although Hastert is unfailingly courteous in his public remarks about Democrats, the House that he presides over is an increasingly angry and polarized place. Moderate Republicans are angry because the party leadership and agenda are so hard-line conservative; hard-line conservatives are angry because, to them, even small compromises feel like defeats; and House Democrats

ROBERT RISKO

are angry because they feel excluded from the legislative process altogether. "Hastert has personal qualities and legislative skills that are good and healthy," Representative David Obey, the ranking Democrat on the Appropriations Committee, said, "but he's chosen to downgrade those. He's determined to win at whatever cost to the institution. In many ways, the greatest deliberative body in the world now more closely resembles the old Soviet congresses: stamp-of-approval and ratify, rather than use your own judgment."

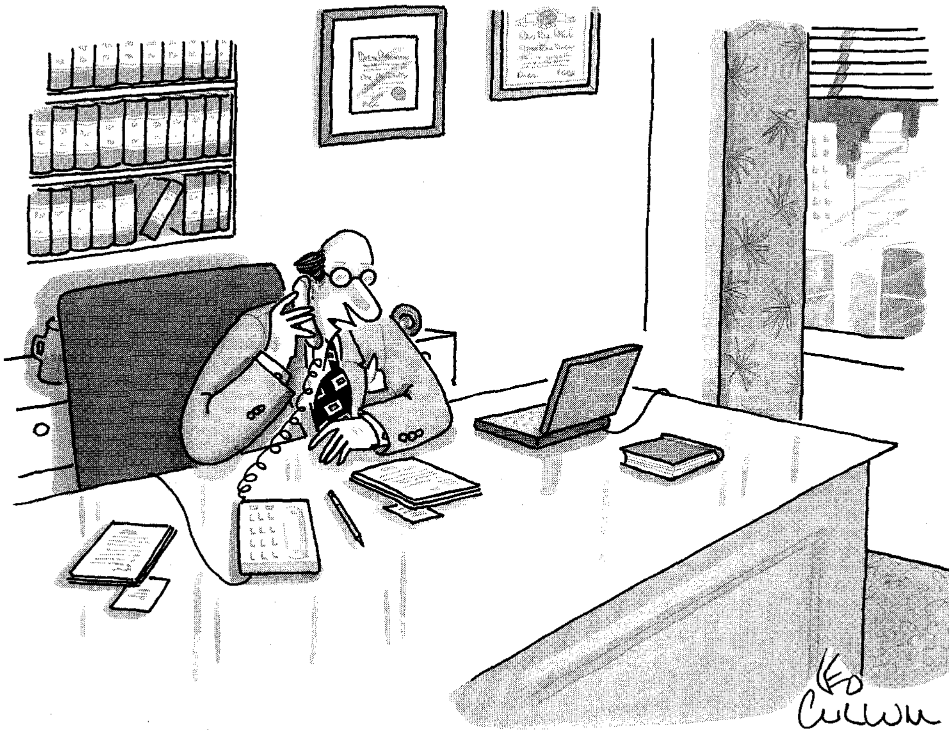
No other G.O.P. elephant is described by the blind more variously than Hastert. If you're a lobbyist or a good-government watchdog, he is the seventeen-year veteran of Washington politics whose younger son, Ethan, has worked for Vice-President Dick Cheney and whose older son, Joshua, is a K Street defense and technology consultant. If you vote in Hastert's district, he is the deeply Illinoisan former coach who spends every weekend at home with his wife and their dogs. If you're his son Joshua, you say that he's a closet moderate and that his hard-line conservative legislative record is simply a matter of "voting the party line." If you're John Podesta, Bill Clinton's former chief of staff, you say that the Speaker "is not a closet moderate." If you listen to one of Hastert's funny, self-deprecating campaign speeches, you can't help liking him. If you follow the bitter partisan contention in the House, you're ready to believe the worst about the man. He is an irrelevant, indispensable, modern, old-fashioned, moderate, archconservative nobody somebody.

A cartoonist who wanted to create a character called Mr. Truck could do worse than to model him on Dennis Hastert. The Speaker has a broad, square face and truck-windshield eyeglasses, but his lips, when you see him in person, are full and incongruously sensual; they make him cute. He used to wrestle at heavyweight, and most of his two hundred and fifty-plus pounds still seem to be muscle. He rolls down Capitol corridors with his huge shoulders canted forward in an attitude of momentum, his big arms sort of dangling. Smaller staffers and legislators trail him or dodge him like passenger cars.

Trucks are all over Hastert's life. His father had a feed business, serving the stockyards of Aurora, Illinois, and raised chickens, pigs, and cattle on a five-acre property in Oswego; he later owned and managed restaurants. Hastert grew up riding in trucks, loading and unloading them, and, in high school and college, driving them. A fringe benefit of his coaching at Yorkville High was that he got to drive a school bus. He spent his summers doing long hauls in a panel van, taking his wrestlers to wrestling camp in Virginia, leading Explorer Scout trips to faraway scenic states, and returning with a trucker's one-armed suntan.

Trucks also brought Hastert to the most important political alliance of his career. In the early nineteen-eighties, as an Illinois state legislator, he chaired a committee that rewrote the state's public-utilities law. The bill was so large, Hastert recalled, that when the legislature's Democrats found themselves unable to pass their own transportation bill they added it as an amendment to Hastert's and got it passed that way. Hastert was unhappy to discover that the amendment strictly regulated the trucking industry. "Instead of safety," he told me, "it was about only letting certain kinds of people do trucking, and you had to buy all these stamps, and so forth. It was perverse to what I wanted to do." When Hastert graduated to the United States Congress, in 1986, the House Minority Leader was Bob Michel, a fellow Illinois Republican. Michel put Hastert on the Commerce Committee, and here he set about trying to deregulate intrastate trucking, hoping to undo the damage he felt he'd done in Illinois. He soon fell in with the anti-regulatory Texan Tom DeLay. "Tom had worked on this issue at the federal level before," Hastert said, "and so I took over a lot of his information and started working on this legislation. We had this kind of give-and-take, and I got to know him pretty well." By 1988, Hastert and DeLay were teaming up to manage the campaign of Representative Edward Madigan, another moderate Illinoisan, for House minority whip; Madigan lost the race to the relentless, entrepreneurial, idea-oriented Newt Gingrich by two votes.

The impression Hastert gives, when you see his truck-

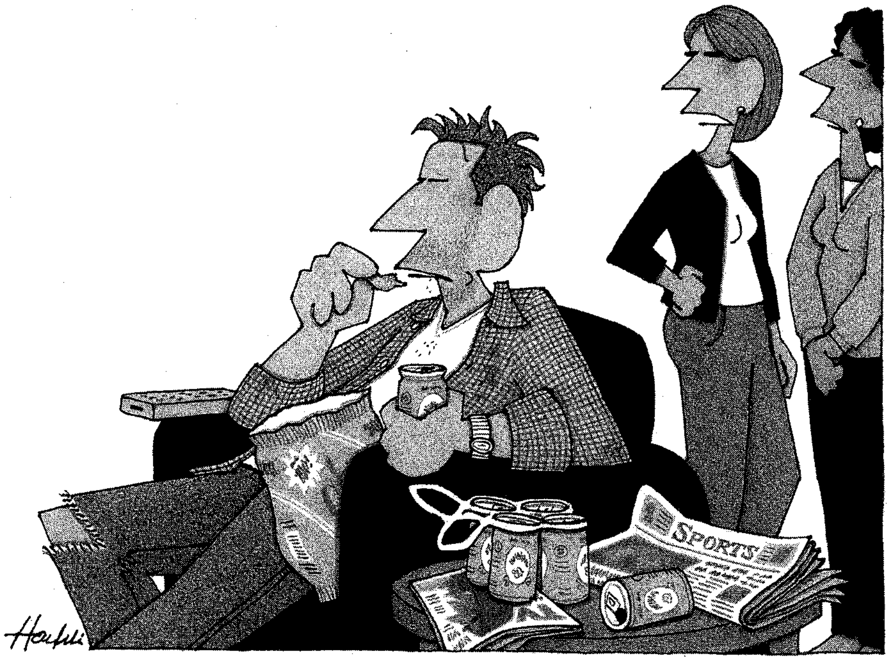


"My normal law-office hours are over, Mr. Hodal, but I always have time and a half for you."

like figure advancing down a hallway, is of tremendous self-sufficiency and physical authority. "He's big enough that you pay attention to him," Vice-President Cheney said. John Irving, the novelist and longtime wrestler, said, "I've always found that heavyweights are among the more agreeable fellows in the wrestling world. It's the hundred-eighteen-pound guy who'll take your head off. Having to lose weight all the time gives you a pissy edge. There's the terrible self-righteousness that comes of denying yourself something." Certainly Tom DeLay, who is not large and seems perpetually to be denying himself Martinis, can be said to have a pissy edge. Hastert's trademark as a leader is to sit and listen to loudly divergent opinions, for many hours if necessary, and then calmly announce what he intends to do.

"We get along well together," said Cheney, who has fished with Hastert in Wyoming. "For me to spend a day on the river with somebody else, just the two of us in the boat, plus the guide, floating the Snake at the foot of the Tetons, that's about as good as it gets. And I don't invite very many people to do that. And Denny's welcome back anytime."

Hastert has had an affinity with leadership ever since he was a football lineman at Oswego High School. The coaching staff was shorthanded, and the head coach made Hastert the assistant coach of the same line he played in. He was, the coach has said, "seventeen going on thirty-five," and he had an exceptional capacity for hard work. "When I was a little kid," Hastert said, "my mom would put a pair of old khaki pants on and go shovel up the chicken houses. She had an egg route every Saturday morning, so we went down in the basement and we candled the eggs and cleaned the eggs. She delivered big boxes, twenty-four dozen eggs in a box. We had a thousand layers. I'd take my naps in the feed bags, because, yeah-oh, everybody had to work." Hastert worked his way through Wheaton College, and then, as a young teacher, he spent summers at Y.M.C.A. work camps in Japan, South America, and Europe. In 1973, he married Jean Kahl, a pretty blue-eyed gym teacher in Yorkville. By 1978, they had two little boys, but he continued to work long hours. Early fall was football season, late fall was the season when his Explorer Scouts sold Christmas wreaths, winter was wrestling season, early summer was the season of sports camps and road trips, and late summer was practice season. Work doesn't feel so much like work if it's all you've ever known. If you're a legislator, simply being willing to read countless binders of complex and tedious policy materials can take you far; it can get you assigned to important committees. The phrases Hastert most often uses in talking about the House are "doing the work" and "getting the job done."



"He's more of a retrosexual."

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He is also a competitor, by nature and by training. "He likes the game," Newt Gingrich said. "He genuinely enjoys himself. And, at each stage of his capabilities, the game just got bigger." When Hastert came to Yorkville High, in 1965, he set about building a championship wrestling team. Near the high school was a grade school with a tiny gymnasium that was going unused, and he got permission to turn it into a training facility for his wrestlers. He bought fleece robes for his team, and he hung a single light over the mats, between the steeply rising bleachers, to make the space feel like a boxing ring. He was among the very first coaches in Illinois to take his wrestlers to the Granby School of Wrestling, in Virginia. By learning the Granby Roll, a move in which the wrestler in the bottom position takes the top man over onto his back, and by going to the mat against national-calibre athletes, Yorkville wrestlers gained a decisive advantage back in Illinois. Crowds of wrestling-mad townspeople filled the bleachers for every meet. The team won the Illinois state championship in 1976, and then the game got bigger. In 1980, Hastert did a summer internship with an Illinois state senator. That same year, he told Jean that he was considering a run for the state legislature, and what did she think? "If that's what you want to do," she said.

Hastert was the first person in his extended family either to graduate from college or to enter politics, and he had some good luck with the latter. He lost his first primary race for the Illinois legislature and reached the general-election ballot only because a Republican incumbent suddenly died. He didn't run for federal office until the local congressman became ill with cancer. According to his staff, Hastert never imagined becoming Speaker of the House. Nonetheless, by 1993 he was chairing the House Republican task force on health care, which helped derail Hillary Clinton's plan for national health insurance, and he was thinking about running for the whip job to replace Newt Gingrich, who was set to become Speaker if the Republicans gained control of the House in 1994. "But there were just too many Illinoisans at the top," he said. "We already had Henry Hyde as policy chairman, Bob Michel was Minority Leader, and Ed Madigan was trying to move up. Yeah-oh, and my mother was really sick with terminal cancer. And so I decided not to do that." He was contemplating a run for the chairmanship of the National Republican Congressional Committee, instead, when Tom DeLay asked him to manage his own campaign for whip.

DeLay was initially viewed as a long shot for the post, given that Gingrich's right-hand man, Robert Walker, of Pennsylvania, was also running. But Hastert had learned how to hustle votes in the Madigan campaign. "We worked very diligently," he said. "I said, 'Tom, you do the politics in the House and I'll do the vote counting.' And, delegation by delegation, we were able to pick people off." Their most inspired move was to venture out of the House and campaign for Republican candidates who seemed likely to unseat Democratic incumbents. The two men travelled around the country together, picking up commitments for the whip race in return for their help. The midterm elections brought seventy-three new Republicans—the famous anti-government freshman class of 1994—and an easy victory for DeLay. Hastert was rewarded with the post of chief deputy whip and with a place at the leadership table in the Republican conference. "That was really quite unusual," Richard Armey, the former House Majority Leader, said. "The question came up, does the deputy whip get a place at the leadership table? We said, well, the deputy whip's Denny Hastert, so *of course*. We really established that tradition because of Denny Hastert."

Gingrich had long been at work restructuring the Republican Party, instructing candidates on the platforms and even on the vocabulary to be used in campaigning, and transforming a political-action committee, GOPAC, into a funding engine for congressional races nationwide. Once he was Speaker, he set about making the House function more like a corporation. He established a six-year term limit for committee chairs and eliminated seniority as the basis for assuming a chair, which allowed him to appoint chairmen at his personal discretion and to reach as far down the seniority ladder as necessary to find a member who would follow orders. His long-range vision was to bypass many committees altogether, replacing them with task forces that reported directly to leadership.

Henry Adams had warned a hundred years earlier, "The more efficient you make Congress, the more dangerous you make it, and the more unpopular." Gingrich's majority shrank with each election, and his national approval ratings were dreadful. Members whose voluntary term limits made them immune to discipline picked policy fights at will; committee chairs rebelled. In November of 1998, after the Republicans lost five more seats in the House, Gingrich stepped aside in the face of a challenge by his heir apparent, Bob Livingston, the Appropriations Committee chairman.

On December 18th, as the House prepared to impeach President Clinton, Tom DeLay spoke with Livingston about the impending Speakership election. "I told him we had to start right away to make sure he had the votes," DeLay said to me. "I think that conversation was kind of a wake-up call for him. He called me around eight o'clock in the evening and asked me to come to his office. I sat down, and he told me he was going to announce on the floor the next day that he was resigning, and call on the President to do the same. Well, that floored me, as you can imagine."

Livingston, like Gingrich and Representatives Henry Hyde and Dan Burton, had an adultery problem. With the House Republicans condemning the President for his sins of Lewinsky, Livingston had decided to blow himself up and try to take the President with him. DeLay, who had ruled out running for Speaker himself ("I was nuclear in the House, because of the impeachment," he told me), found Hastert the next morning and said the job was his. Hastert's face turned white. "He wasn't real thrilled," DeLay said. Hastert went to his office to collect himself, and DeLay sent Representative Bill Paxon, a good friend of Hastert's, to try to bring him around. In the meantime, DeLay's chief of staff, Susan Hirschmann, got on the phone and began lining up votes for Hastert. His staff already had the names of forty Republican members who, just a few weeks earlier, had urged him to run for Majority Leader.

In the House chamber, Livingston made his speech. "I was watching TV," Jean Hastert said. "I can remember listening to him, and then, when he stepped down, I was thinking, Who is it going to be? I'd mentally go through all of the names, the pros and cons. All my friends said they knew right away that it was Denny. But his name did not come on my radar at all, I guess because we'd had a conversation—that he was happy with where he was and what he was doing. So then I get this phone call from him, and he says, 'You're not going to believe this, but they want me to be the Speaker. What do you think?' I always have a pat answer: 'You do whatever you feel is the right thing to do.' "

Hastert, in Washington, put down the phone and told Bill Paxon that Jean didn't want him to do it.

"He maybe did interpret my hesitancy," Jean conceded. "I wanted him to feel like 'If that's what you want to do, go ahead and do it.' But, at the same time, it's like 'Why would you *want* to do it?' " One of her fears was for Hastert's safety. Although she rarely visits Washington, Jean happened to have been in the whip's office on July 24, 1998, when a deranged gunman killed two Capitol policemen there. Hastert would have walked right into the shooting had he not stopped to talk to a U.P.I. reporter; Jean, hearing the shots, had taken cover under a desk. She was also worried about the repeated spankings that Gingrich had received from the media. "I'd seen what they'd done with Newt," she said. "I thought, Now, Denny is thick-skinned enough to handle that. But I'm not."

While Hastert went to the House

chapel to pray, and while Gingrich sent his own senior staffers to the floor to help Hirschmann line up votes, Paxon called Jean and told her that she seemed to have given her husband the wrong impression. Paxon got her to repeat the words "Go ahead and do it." Then he went to reassure Hastert of her support. Through the windows of their house in Yorkville, Jean could see a TV news van in the street.

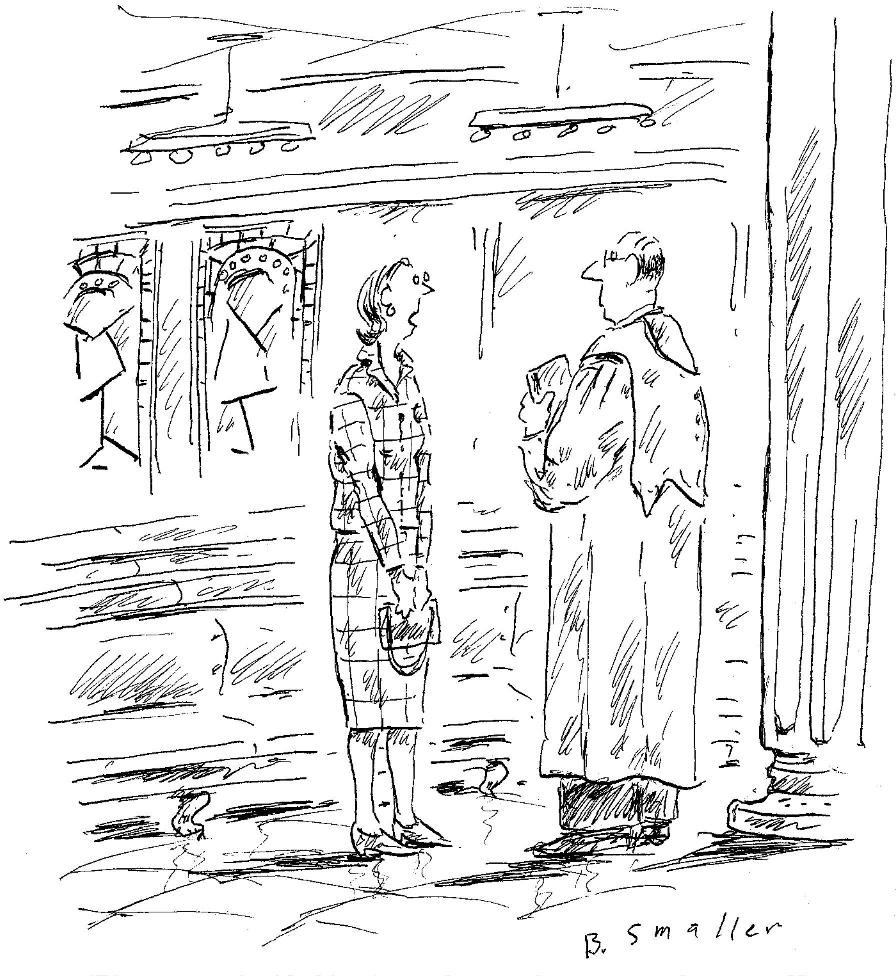
Gingrich advised the Republican conference to elect Hastert, avoid a divisive fight, and go home. There seems to have been little disagreement. Hastert was the only viable candidate from the leadership table, and in his four years as chief deputy whip he'd worked with all the members of the conference and learned how to reconcile their discordant politics and personalities. Jean's fears notwithstanding, his genial bulk and gluey speech made him an unlikely target for the media or the Democrats. It was a case, Armey said, "of exactly the right guy showing up at exactly the right time." Hastert emerged from prayer to be elected, by acclamation, as the first draft Speaker in modern history. He'd spent a year and a half helping DeLay become whip; now, in six hours, he'd leapfrogged past him. Typically for Hastert, news of his election was overshadowed by news of the President's impeachment. (The media phrase of the moment was "Hastert who?") At the Chicago airport two nights later, Hastert was greeted by a crowd of photographers and looked behind him to see what famous person they were waiting for.

The Speaker's office, which Gingrich had decorated with the skull of a Tyrannosaurus rex, is now home to a menagerie of smaller and friendlier animal figures. There's a carving of eight little bears in an eight-man shell, with a smaller bear at coxswain, and a life-size painted figure of a dog curled up on a cushion. Guarding the fireplace is a wooden fox that seems, from its posture, to be both cowering and preparing to turn and snarl. (The Speaker's suite is full of visual references to the Fox River, whose valley runs through Hastert's district and on whose banks he and Jean lived for many years.) In combination with the office's gilt moldings and high ceilings (and chandelier), the riot of gifty items gives the room a kind of public coziness, like a Bombay Company showroom.

"With me, what you see is what you get," Hastert told me the first time we met, in June. "There's not a lot of nuances here." He was wearing a power shirt, suspenders, and no jacket. When we sat down, he tilted his head back and narrowed his eyes, as if I were hazardous spray coming over the bow of a motorboat. His wariness was understandable; politicians are so well trained at self-concealment that the media have no choice but to inflate small mistakes into major stories, which makes politicians even more wary, which makes the media even more dependent on mistakes.

Naturally, I was hoping he would make a mistake. We spoke first about the Medicare prescription-drug legislation that was about to emerge from committee—a pet issue of Hastert's and one that he had recently weighed in on. Last winter, the Bush Administration released a plan for Medicare reform under which prescription-drug coverage would be offered only to seniors who left traditional Medicare and joined a managed-care plan. The proposal amounted to a cruel dose of market discipline, and Hastert informed the White House that it would never fly in the House. The White House backed down hastily, presenting a new plan that would offer seniors a defined prescription-drug benefit under traditional Medicare but encourage them to shop around for a better plan with federally subsidized private insurers.

"One of the ways to hold down the cost of health care," Hastert said, "is to put somebody in that is a purchaser of health care, to give them some incentive to shop around. And all of a sudden the doctor will say, 'Hey, I can get my money straightaway rather than waiting for the insurance company'—and this is another issue, this is not pharmaceuticals—he thinks, Maybe I can discount, give this buyer a little bit better price. In-



"How many bad habits do you have to have to equal one vice?"

stead of charging sixty dollars for an office call, I might be able to save on nurses' costs, on bookkeeping costs, and I might be able to charge forty-five dollars for a call. . . ."

Hastert's explanation, which he pursued at considerable length, amounted to a lecture on free-market economics. Indeed, no matter what policy question I put to him, he replied with some variation on the basic conservative credo: the free market is good, citizens should be allowed to spend their money as they please, government should be lean. When I asked him how far he would go in reducing taxes and shrinking government if he had a Denny Hastert Dream Team in every branch of government, he spoke vaguely of the need for radical tax reform, maybe a flat tax or a national sales tax, that would encourage American corporations not to move capital and jobs overseas. When I asked him what he planned to do if the federal deficit continued to balloon, he escaped into a quip. "I used to teach high-school economics," he said. "Everything I teach here, sometimes it's on a sixteen-year-old level. But that's not bad for Congress."

In contrast to his Senate counterpart, Bill Frist, who invokes his history as a transplant surgeon with surgical discipline of purpose (there's nary a golf joke), Hastert seems to talk about his past as much to reassure himself as to produce a political effect. His stories are what a media consultant might call his "hip pocket" material, which he can reach for when he's under stress or hears himself droning. Hastert cultivates the manner of a solitary, benevolent, long-suffering grownup beset by fractious and demanding children. His rhetoric may implicitly condescend to his fellow-legislators, but, as Republican government-bashing goes, it's pretty mild. And Hastert ventures out of his coachlike persona at his own risk. In July, on "Meet the Press," when NBC's Tim Russert asked him if the nuclear threat posed by Saddam Hussein had been overstated, his hip pocket was empty. "You know, we don't know," he said. "First of all, we do know that Saddam Hussein possessed, even today, that it's there, barrels, as a matter of fact, tons of plutonium, some of it this yellowcake plutonium from Niger, that they

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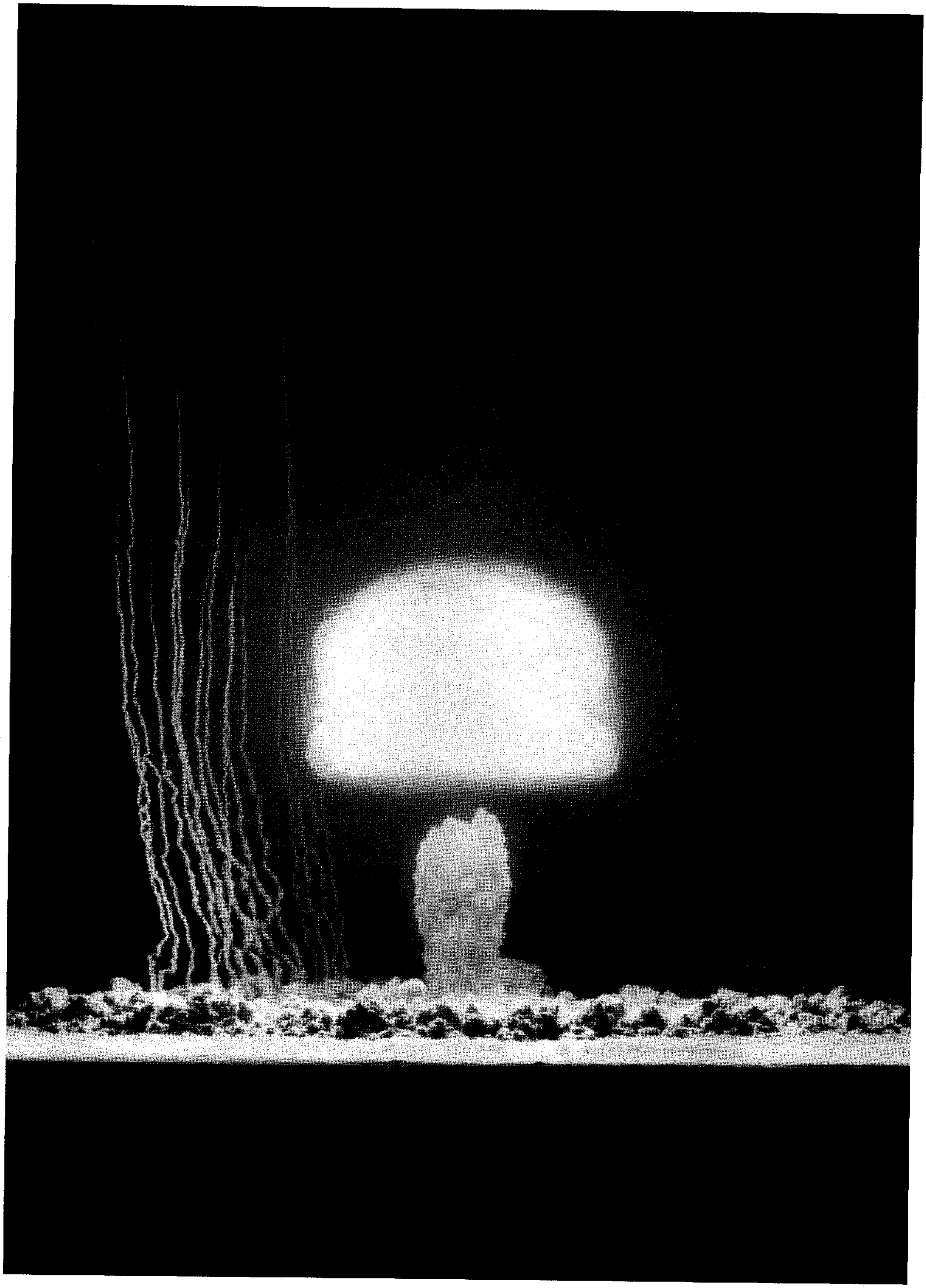
ON PHOTOGRAPHY

DARKNESS VISIBLE

The atomic bomb set off in the Nevada desert on June 4, 1953, a little over sixty miles from Las Vegas, was code-named Climax. It was dropped from an airplane and detonated 1,334 feet above the desert floor. Rockets fired from the ground just before detonation, to help measure the shock wave, left smoke trails beside the mushroom cloud. The United States conducted a hundred and six nuclear tests in the atmosphere over Nevada in the nineteen-fifties and early sixties, most of them observed by American soldiers or, in the case of the Zucchini test in 1955, by Canadian and British military observers, for whom bench seating was provided thirteen miles from the blast (above). The spectacular nuclear explosions in the desert and in the Pacific Ocean were photographed by a unit working out of the Lookout Mountain Air Force Station, in Hollywood. Most of the unit's pictures have been destroyed, lost, or are still classified, but some of them are available in government archives. For the elegant and emotionally charged "100 Suns" (Knopf; $45), Michael Light, a photographer and artist who lives in San Francisco, has assembled Lookout Mountain images and photographs of nuclear tests made by the U.S. Army Signal Corps. In Light's previous book, "Full Moon," digitally transferred images from the Apollo missions were used to create a fictional journey into space. Both books present photographs on black pages with little or no type. Useful information and technical annotations are provided at the back. The apocalyptic visual narrative in "100 Suns" escalates from the eerie ominousness of black-and-white photographs showing embryonic explosions set off from towers in the desert to the over-the-top splendor of Wagnerian nuclear sunsets on the Enewetak and Bikini atolls. In the early photographs, soldiers, often kneeling, with their backs to nearby blasts, provide the point of view. At the end, the camera is in the clouds, in the middle of the terrible beauty. (An installation of the photographs will be shown at the Hosfelt Gallery in San Francisco between October 18th and November 26th.)

—*Sharon DeLano*



US NARA / ©2003 MICHAEL LIGHT

had purchased, you know, previously." Russert, who seemed to have stopped listening some minutes earlier, did not point out that plutonium doesn't come in yellow-cake form, or that government officials had already admitted that the Niger documents were forgeries.

Originality is seldom an asset in politics. Hastert's best tactic is simply to smother questions with his heavyweight bulk, and he brings a grinding discipline to the task. When I asked him how he felt about the impeachment of Bill Clinton, four and a half years afterward, he described Clinton's loss of credibility as a "personal tragedy." Later, I asked him about Watergate and Richard Nixon. "A tragedy," he said. The legal woes of former Illinois governor George Ryan? "A tragedy."

His wariness remained impregnable until I happened to mention my parents' fondness for Adlai Stevenson. Hastert stopped in mid-drone, and his eyes opened fully. I'd been sitting in front of him for twenty minutes, but I felt as if he were seeing me for the first time. In a softer and kinder voice, he asked if I was from Illinois.

"Born in Illinois, yeah, born—"

"Where?"

"Born outside Chicago. Western Springs."

"Oh, sure," he said warmly, as if I'd mentioned a friend of his. "Yeah-oh, my district isn't too far. I have some of DuPage County. I don't reach quite as close in as Western Springs."

His expression closed up again. For a few seconds, though, I'd glimpsed how it must feel to be liked and trusted by him. I could see how he might command very serious paternal authority by holding out the promise of attention to smaller, younger men.

On a warm June afternoon in South Bend, Indiana, at a conference center with discreet signage and little ponds whose aeration spouts were vaulting lustily, the Speaker stepped out of a black Chevy Suburban and put his arm around the young local congressman, Chris Chocola. Hastert had come to South Bend to do three back-to-back fund-raising events in two hours.

Chocola, a bright-eyed freshman, sat down with the Speaker in a carpeted private office of the conference center. Hastert's belly spilled over in his white shirt, his suspenders visible beneath his open suit coat, his hair a little shaggy. Chocola's hair was dark and looked razor-cut. He assumed a politely deferential posture while Hastert coached him.

"What'd you get in the election?"

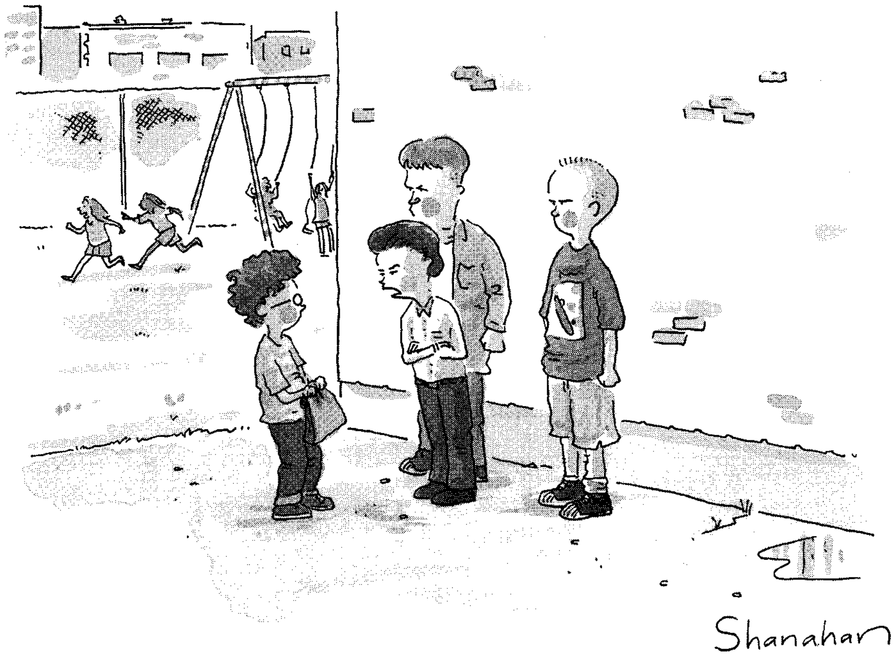
"Fifty point four per cent," Chocola said.

"You could build on that," Hastert said. "You put in the sweat equity, keep showing up at things, you could build that up to fifty-five, fifty-eight, sixty per cent. You have to stay focussed on your district and make sure the media know you're there. That's a lot easier when you're the incumbent."

"I don't see how members from urban districts manage without the attention," Chocola said.

Hastert shrugged. "That cuts both ways. My district's in the Chicago umbrella. You can't get anything in the media, and you can't afford TV ads. But what that means is that TV is too expensive for your opponent, too. He can't come in a couple weeks before the election and drop half a million dollars on TV ads and knock you out. If you've done your work in the district, put in the sweat equity—remember, it's a lot easier for you to get attention than it is for him—he can't touch you."

Everyone who has wrestled seriously talks about the special unpleasantness of the training. "It's *boring*," John Irving said. "It's as repetitious as sit-ups or weight lifting or skipping rope." Hastert is sixty-two years old and diabetic; he gives himself daily insulin injections in his thigh. Last year, he visited a hundred and seventy-eight congressional districts, an average of more than three a week. In contrast to Gingrich, who preached the need for a national Republican unity of message, Hastert urges candidates to tailor their strategies to their particular districts. Grover Norquist, the president of Americans for Tax Reform, recalled how receptive the Speaker was to the idea of cultivating constituencies that other Republican leaders had shown little interest in. "Hastert's been very, very active—he's a party builder," Norquist said. "I went to him when he was Speaker, and I said we are helping to organize the Republican Indian-American Coalition. All subcontinental Indians. Dot Indians, as opposed to feather Indians. And he said, 'Great, bring 'em in. We'll set it up.' I said, 'We are organizing Muslim Americans.' He said, 'That's great.' " Hastert has the eager, optimistic cosmopolitanism of a Midwestern civics teacher. He loves Thai food. He's an avid CODEL (Congressional delegation) traveller and is still in touch with friends he made abroad with the Y.M.C.A. When I asked him if he had gay friends, he replied that he has friends who are single. "They're



"You want maybe to nap with the fishes?"

really good people," he said. "And I've never asked." Does he care? "If I cared," he said, "I'd probably ask." (He is uncomfortable with Senator Frist's advocacy of a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage. "I think the courts should decide that," he said.) He is the affable, tolerant heavyweight, intent on simply winning.

"How do I get an outside line?"

In South Bend, four thousand dollars got you half an hour with the Speaker in a grimly lit conference room where lemon slices floated in pitchers of iceless water. Five hundred dollars got you a glass of cheap Merlot and a photograph with Hastert. A hundred dollars got you a seat in a banquet hall where the mayor of the nearby town of Elkhart, who was dressed in what appeared to be a bowling shirt, gave an exuberant prayer of thanks to God for Chris Chocola, beseeching Him to grant Chocola "supernatural powers" in Washington and thanking Him for all the campaign contributors present in the room. Then the coach took the podium. He spoke rapidly, with semi-swallowed logical connectors and a kind of forward-staggering momentum. He recycled familiar snippets like a d.j. sampling himself, mixing and matching short loops of anecdote and rhetoric. *Loop:* "I used to think the toughest job I ever had was teaching high-school economics to sixteen-year-old kids. That was before I became Speaker of the House and tried to teach economics to certain congressmen." *Loop:* "We were eighty-one votes down when I came to Congress, in 1986. Back then, there were two things I thought I'd never see. The first was the fall of Communist Eastern Europe. And the second was a Republican majority in the House of Representatives." *Series of short loops delivered in a weary monotone:* on recent Republican tax policy ("put a little more money in people's pockets"), on education, on strengthening the military, and then, again, verbatim, on taxes ("put a little more money in people's pockets"). *Loop:* "They call me the Speaker, but, yeah-oh, they really ought to call me the Listener."

Hastert is most entertaining when you get him off policy and onto the nuts and bolts of legislating. "With a very tight majority," he told me, "we don't have any choice but to run a tight ship. Basically, it's been the choice of the Democrats, most of the time, to *make* us pass legislation on our own. They haven't helped us much. But I understand that."

Although House Democrats grumble about the shortened congressional workweek and about the curtailment and abrupt scheduling of committee hearings, their most serious complaints center on the Rules Committee. Under Hastert's control, the committee has seen to it that most important legislation is brought to the House floor under a "closed rule," which prevents Democrats from offering amendments that might attract votes from moderate Republicans. "I don't care if Hastert's a nice, Teddy-bear kind of guy," a senior Democratic staffer told me. "These things are happening under his watch, and, whether or not he controls them, he's responsible for them. It's like war criminals denying responsibility by saying they're just following orders." The Republican leadership insists that it's doing nothing as bad as what the Democrats did during their forty years in control of the House. Democrats quote the bitter complaints that some of these same Republicans were making ten years ago. To which the Republicans reply that they did ease the rules when they took power—and look how chaotic the House became under Gingrich! Some of the sniping has a ritual, grade-school quality to it. But the rage of the Democrats is real, and, with two hundred and five seats in the House, they represent nearly half the country's population. I asked Hastert what the Democrats are even *there* for.

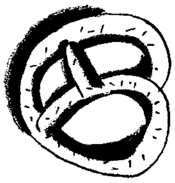
He laughed. "The first eight years I was in the Congress, I asked myself the same question. 'What are we here for?' Because, basically, they ran a pretty tight ship, too. But there is a dialogue that goes on. It goes on in committees, it goes on even in marking up, in the amendment process. Almost every committee has less than three members' difference. You have to keep some kind of margin in certain committees in order to be able to control things. But, any time they can pick up one or two of your members, they can pass legislation. And it happens all the time. Committee work is by and large a bipartisan process. When you go through that and get it done, and get the bill to the floor, sometimes you have to protect that bill, because a lot of mischief can be done to it. But the process is a process of subcommittees and committees."

I mentioned the Ways and Means Committee meeting in which Bill Thomas, the chairman, had sicced the Capitol police on the committee's obstreperous Democrats. The House, I said, seemed like an angrier place than it was fifteen years ago.

"Fifteen years ago?" Hastert frowned. "I had just come in fifteen years ago. But this place, I think how it's changed. All of a sudden we've got people in and out of here in six years. When I first came here, people were around for a long time. There was a little bit more collegiality. Bob Michel and Dan Rostenkowski drove back and forth to Illinois every weekend. You were in a car eighteen hours one way, eighteen hours another way, every week. I'd sit down and listen to Bob and Rostenkowski talk, and there was a very good collegiality. They had their differences, and they'd fight their fights, but people spent more time here. Now everybody's on a plane, they're going home. Part of the process of listening to your constituency demands that you do that. But when people lived here it was an almost clubby kind of group."

As a coach in Yorkville, Hastert was famously impassive during matches. While opposing coaches paced at the edge of the mats and shouted at their wrestlers ("Stand up!" "Grab the wrist!" "Head up!"), he sat silently, with his arms crossed over a clipboard. His view was that matches are won in the months of practice, not on the day of the meet.

As Speaker, in contrast to Gingrich, whom it's easy to imagine pacing the mats and shouting, he lets his committees do their work. The votes on the floor are, ideally, mere formalities.



But if the actual legislative work happens mainly in committees, and if that work consists largely in the legislative processing of White House initiatives, how powerful can the Speaker be? Nicholas Calio, who is now a lobbyist with Citigroup, gave me one of the few good answers that I heard. "Power is calling a meeting and getting people to come," Calio said. "This is partly just the institutional power of the Speakership, but it's very heavily accented by people's feelings for this particular Speaker. Denny calls the meetings. Denny is the go-to guy when you've got a real problem. When there's a jurisdictional dispute between committee chairs, he calls the meetings. He's willing to sit down in a room for seven or eight hours to referee the fight. You sit down and he says, 'We're not leaving this room until we've worked this out.' Which he makes totally nonthreatening, by the way. And, when he has to, he can bring down the hammer—knock you off committees, take away your chairmanship."

According to Vice-President Cheney, Hastert doesn't come to the White House to say what he himself wants; it's always about the collective opinion of the House. Indeed, in his remarks, Cheney shifted almost unnoticeably from "he" to "they." Hastert's power, Cheney said, "is based on his ability to know what will and won't fly in the House, his capacity to deliver time after time after time. They have the capacity—partly because they've been very good at delivering when they say they can deliver—to help shape what it is we propose. And that's significant influence."

We're accustomed to thinking that power requires a predicate, the power to bend the world in some particular direction. For Hastert, though, power seems always to have been more about service than about the advancement of his own ends or vision. He became a born-again Christian in high school, and much of his time at Wheaton College, an evangelical institution, was devoted to religious study. He did reserve-officer training at Wheaton, expecting to fight in Vietnam after graduation, but he'd had three sports-related operations on his shoulder and he flunked the Army physical. "That's really why I went into education," he told me. His plan was to do five years of alternative service as a teacher and then go into business. When his ideal of service got tangled up with competitive sports, however, five years became sixteen. "Wrestling was just the medium," Mike Hancock, one of his former wrestlers at Yorkville, said. "It was the way to watch young men grow up and teach them how to be successful."

A similar mixture of sport and service seems to motivate Hastert as a legislator. Like many of the people most energetic in politics today, the congressmen who log endless hours on Capitol Hill while we in the pleasure-seeking mainstream are loading up on DVDs at Best Buy and following the interesting travails of Kobe Bryant, he comes from a religious college that provided instruction in service and submission, rather than in partying and doubt. He now has a standing weekly lunch date with Tom DeLay and a prominent Presbyterian minister, Charles Wright. But unlike DeLay, who is happy to inform you that the theory of evolution is bad science, Hastert is reticent about his religious beliefs and the role they play in his commitment to service. When I asked him about creationism, he said, "I think there's a place for a person's faith, and what you really believe in, and I think most people have been moderating some of those beliefs over the years. But you have to work with what the science is here, too."

Although Hastert did recently sign a book deal with Regnery Publishing, he isn't a boaster or a credit-grabber. Bill Lipinski, the ranking House Democrat from Illinois, gave me a rapturous account of Hastert's bipartisan work on behalf of the state ("He's one of the nicest, friendliest, most coöperative human beings I've ever been involved with in politics") and offered only one criticism of his friend. "I don't think he plays up his accomplishments enough," Lipinski said. "For example, because Tom DeLay is a strong personality, and because Denny used to be his assistant, there's a perception that DeLay has tremendous influence with the Speaker. But Gingrich and DeLay and Armey would never have accomplished what they did in the House without Denny Hastert. And now Denny chooses, maybe out of loyalty, not to demonstrate his independence from DeLay."

Because DeLay does have a strong vision, both political and religious, it can be hard to tell where Hastert leaves off and DeLay begins. Hill-watchers parse a handful of incidents—the time DeLay embarrassed Hastert by opposing the use of American force in Kosovo, the time Hastert embarrassed DeLay by compelling him to vote for gun-trigger locks and other minor gun-control provisions, the time Hastert silenced DeLay in a conference committee meeting—none of which rise much above the level of gossip. Hastert has reportedly urged DeLay to strike a less antagonistic public profile; but DeLay has reasons of his own to try to seem more statesmanlike. He is, for one thing, very keen to succeed Hastert as Speaker. I had the impression, in listening to DeLay on the subject of Hastert, that he was speaking through clenched teeth. I asked him to tell me about the biggest disagreements that he and Hastert have had since he became Speaker.

"We haven't had any," DeLay said. "None."

"No disagreements?" I said.

"None. We've been together on everything."

This was demonstrably untrue. "But even if you end up together on everything," I said, "there surely must be times when you start out in different places."

"Nope."

"You agree about everything from the start."

"That's right."

"Sort of separated-at-birth, then."

"Yep," DeLay said. "We're very similar. We're both very strong Christians. We're both very strong conservatives. We come from very similar backgrounds. There's not much difference between us."

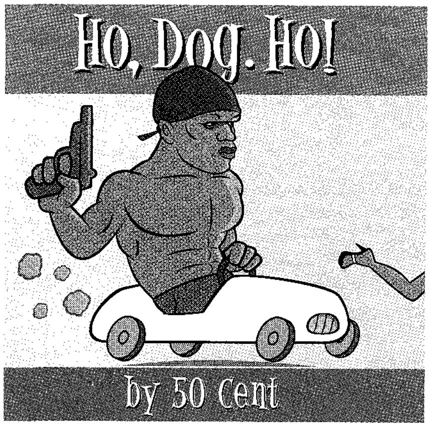
Though Hastert sounds somewhat more moderate, the two men certainly are more alike than different. "They just genuinely like each other," Hastert's chief of staff, Scott Palmer, told me. "Tom looks up to Denny, and Denny admires Tom's intellect." Nevertheless, at least in my hearing, neither man spoke of the other in the relaxed way you speak of a friend. DeLay remains stuck on the second-highest rung of the leadership ladder, year after year, while his former deputy calls the meetings and new Republican stars like Representative Rob Portman and the majority whip, Roy Blunt, emerge as challengers. "He ain't gonna be Speaker over Hastert," Newt Gingrich said. "He may be Speaker *after* Hastert. And Tom knows that. I think you'll find that he is very aware of the fact that the Speaker has all of the appointments that matter. The Speaker appoints all the conferees, the Speaker owns the Rules Committee. It takes a very, very weak Speaker to be challenged directly. And Denny Hastert ain't weak." Hastert himself, despite his loyalty, seems to have had quite enough of hearing that DeLay is the real power in the House. His mouth tightened visibly when I brought the subject up.

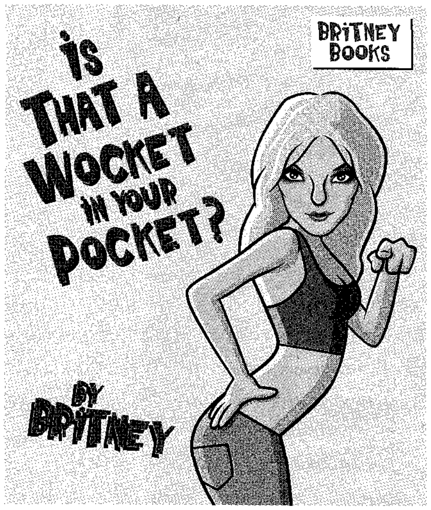
In the end, the Speaker's power rests on his party's majority in the House, and that majority is currently just twenty-three seats. On an issue like taxation, which practically defines Republican identity, Hastert can hold his majority together by restricting amendments that might peel off moderates. He can even afford some defections if he can pick up votes from Southern Democrats. (This in contrast to the Senate, where a single member can take the entire chamber hostage.) Things get tricky, though, when an issue doesn't split neatly along party lines, as is the case with the Medicare prescription-drug bill.

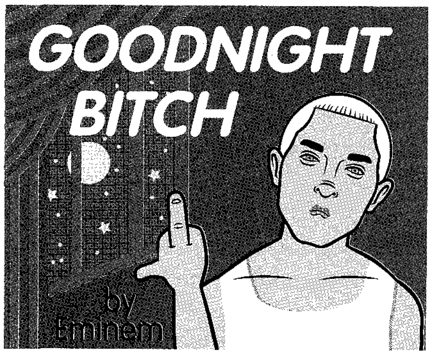
In an intricate compromise, brokered by Hastert, the bill was co-authored by Bill Thomas's Ways and Means Committee and Representative Billy Tauzin's Energy and Commerce Committee. It ran to seven hundred pages and was first posted online at 11:50 P.M. on June 25th—twelve hours later than Democrats say they were told it would be available. The Rules Committee, meeting from one o'clock to five o'clock in the morning, established narrow terms for its consideration on the floor: only one amendment could be offered, and debate would be limited to four hours. (This again in contrast to the Senate, where the corresponding legislation had been debated for two weeks, with more than fifty amendments offered.) The floor "debate," on the afternoon of June 26th, was typical C-SPANnery. Democrat after Democrat declared this "sham" bill bad for seniors and likely to kill Medicare; Republican after Republican praised this excellent legislation that would benefit all seniors and help save Medicare.

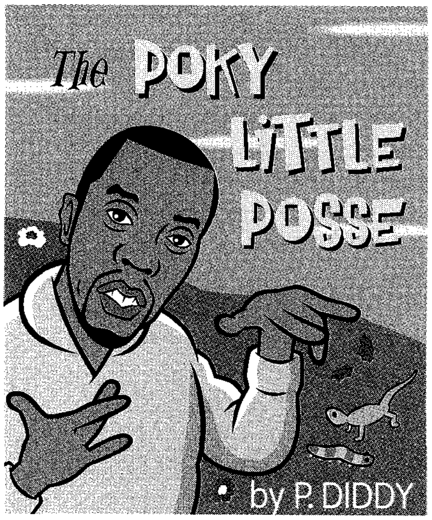
Then again, what could anybody say? The bill was curiously Hastert-like, huge, well intentioned, impene-

NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

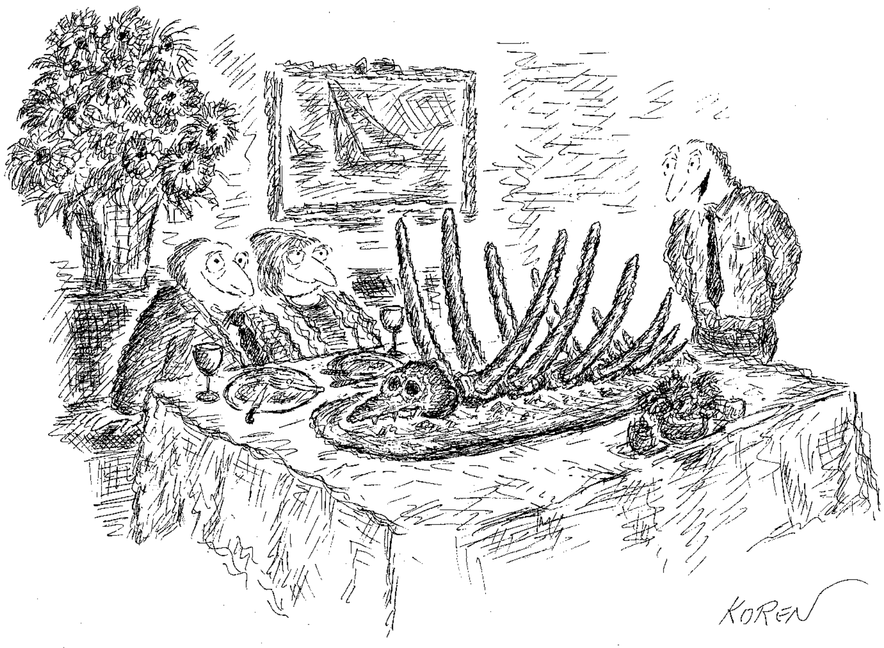



BRITNEY BOOKS
IS THAT A WOCKET IN YOUR POCKET?
BY BRITNEY





MICHAEL WELDON, ANDY BOROWITZ



"Wow—good job!"

• •

trable. Since Medicare was created, in 1965, prescription drugs have become both vastly more effective and vastly more expensive. If you're a senior with high cholesterol, you might postpone or avoid twenty-thousand-dollar heart surgery by taking a thousand dollars' worth of Lipitor every year. But Medicare, perversely, pays only for the surgery, not for the Lipitor. Supporters of the Tauzin-Thomas bill hoped that it would encourage the use of drugs, which are more cost-effective than hospitalization, and force Medicare to operate more efficiently. But nobody was sure if it would work. Possibly, by subsidizing the entry of private insurers into the Medicare business, it would hasten the privatization of the program. But, if private insurers chose not to participate, it could become so expensive as to bankrupt Medicare in short order. Its likeliest beneficiaries were President Bush and other Republican candidates, who, if it passed, would be immunized against charges that they'd done nothing about rising drug costs. Its likeliest victims were younger Americans, who would be footing the bill for decades to come. But the bill also wasn't great for seniors, who would receive minimal relief before 2006 and very incomplete relief thereafter. Nor was the bill especially friendly to the insurance industry. Congressional Republicans are now powerful enough to dictate terms to lobbyists, and they told the insurance industry, essentially, that this bill was the best they were going to get and that they'd better support it if they wanted congressional help on other issues dear to their hearts. The bill was reasonably gentle on big pharmaceutical companies, which have spent tens of millions of dollars trying to persuade Congress that they don't have enough money. Although, for example, the Tauzin-Thomas bill theoretically allowed the reimportation of low-priced drugs from overseas, it included a "poison pill" provision that required federal agencies to certify the safety of imported drugs (no poison pills, please), which the agencies say they are unable to do. The pharmaceutical industry, however, is almost Gingrichianly unpopular with ordinary seniors, who are particularly galled that Canadian and British seniors pay so much less for their drugs than Americans do. On June 26th, there was a strong bipartisan movement in the House to remove the poison-pill provision, even though this would enrage the pharmaceutical industry and disrupt the incredibly complicated and delicate network of trade-offs and compromises and cost concealments that made the bill halfway viable politically. And so Hastert, who for the past ten years has stayed awake reading about these issues while most of us were sleeping, found himself as much as twenty votes short of victory a few hours before the bill came on the floor.

I was in the Capitol that evening. You forget, if you haven't been there in a while, how massive the building is, how secularly opulent its rotunda. Four Democrats were playing bridge in the Rayburn Room. In Statuary Hall, a slender blond friend of Representative Paul Ryan was piloting a Segway at exciting speeds. Representative Deborah Pryce, one of the prescription-drug bill's chief architects, came marching through the gallery with a small entourage. "Still whipping?" Jonathan Kaplan, a reporter for *The Hill*, asked her.

"Uh-huh," Pryce said.

"How's it going?"

"We're optimistic."

Up in the whip's offices, where great quantities of coleslaw and Sterno-heated ribs and biscuits were available to hungry legislators, I opened a window and was blasted with humid D.C. air; it was like lifting the lid of a lobster pot. I saw the whip, Roy Blunt, disappear into his office with Representative Jo Ann Emerson. When they emerged, five minutes later, Blunt shooed me away.

"With bills like that, when you get it done, there's always blood on the floor," Hastert told me later. "I think the Democrats decided that if we're going to pass it they're going to make us pass it by ourselves. We had eight, nine of their people—a few of them for rural health care, and a few for other things. And they stuck with us. I really didn't think they'd stick with us. But they did. And we had probably twenty-five of our people who weren't there, for various reasons. Some of 'em wanted hard-nosed reimportation, some of 'em were philosophically opposed to Medicare in the first place."

The actual whipping, he said, comes down to trust. "All you have in this business is your word. A lot of those folks we put the count on trusted that I was trying to do the right thing. There comes a point in a vote like that, yeah-oh, everybody can have their views, their own personal point of view on how something should happen, but when it comes down to a party issue—the President's running on it, the committee's done its work—there's a point where you say, 'This is what the Party's decided, are you going to stand in the way of letting us get done what we have to get done? It's about our collective opinion and my ability to move legislation, and I depend on your vote.' It can be a hard sell, because you can't threaten people, because you need them on the next vote. Especially when you're running a majority as thin as we are."

It was just after two o'clock in the morning when the Speaker pro tem announced a fifteen-minute vote on final passage of the bill. It looked for a while as if Hastert might lose. The Speaker has the power, though, to hold a vote open, and he did this for an extra thirty-eight minutes. He could be seen towering over problem members, his face red, as he asked them for their vote. Jo Ann Emerson, who wanted unrestricted reimportation, held out until she'd received a promise from Hastert to allow a later vote on the poison pill and to adopt the result of this vote as the official position of House Republicans in conference with the Senate. The nay count, as seen on C-SPAN, had been stuck on two hundred and fifteen for twenty minutes. After Emerson extracted the promise, the yea count went up to two hundred and sixteen, whereupon the Speaker pro tem immediately gavelled. It was five minutes before three. Twelve hours later, after a short Friday on the Hill, Hastert was on a plane again, bound for the Midwest and his next campaign appearance.

"You've got a job," he told me in Yorkville. It was the Fourth of July, and we were seated in the open cab of a 1954 Mack fire truck, the larger of two fire engines owned by his campaign. Hastert pointed to a button on the floor, near my right foot. "Every once in a while, you've got to push that button. Let 'em know it's a fire engine."

We were slowly rolling in bright sunshine toward the high school where Hastert used to teach. A Boy Scout troop was mustering behind us. I touched the button with my foot, and the truck's siren enveloped us with sound. I touched it again to drive the pitch higher. On the grassy shoulders of Somonauk Street, a narrow line of Yorkville residents broke into smiles and applause as we approached. Cameras were pointed at us, and I found myself waving. Somewhere, a siren seemed to be going crazy. "You don't have to keep pushing it," Hastert shouted at me.

"I'm not touching it."

"Something's wrong," he said, disabling the siren with a switch on the dashboard.

A woman in a "Bush for President" T-shirt loudly yayed us. Capitol police in plain clothes were trailing us discreetly while volunteers in red Hastert T-shirts handed out red plastic firemen's hats with elastic chin strings and blue Hastert campaign stickers. Hastert happily bent his shoulders to the task of turning the truck's big wheel. He extended his left arm horizontally, his fingers fluttering on the end of it. "Morning!" he shouted. "How you doin' this morning? Shady spot there, huh? Hi, folks. How you doin'? Hello! Hi, folks."

"Hey, Denny, you got a license for that thing?"

"Yeah, it's antique! So am I!"

The Yorkville fire chief hopped up on the running board. "Hey, Denny, we're glad you came out to us," he said. "It wouldn't be the same without you here."

"Thanks, Chief."

I reminded Hastert about my job.

"Try it again," he said, flipping the switch on the dashboard.

I tapped the button on the floor. The siren rose, and rose some more, hysterically. Hastert shut it down.

"Hey, Denny, you got a license for that?"

"Antique license!" he shouted. "We're both antiques!"

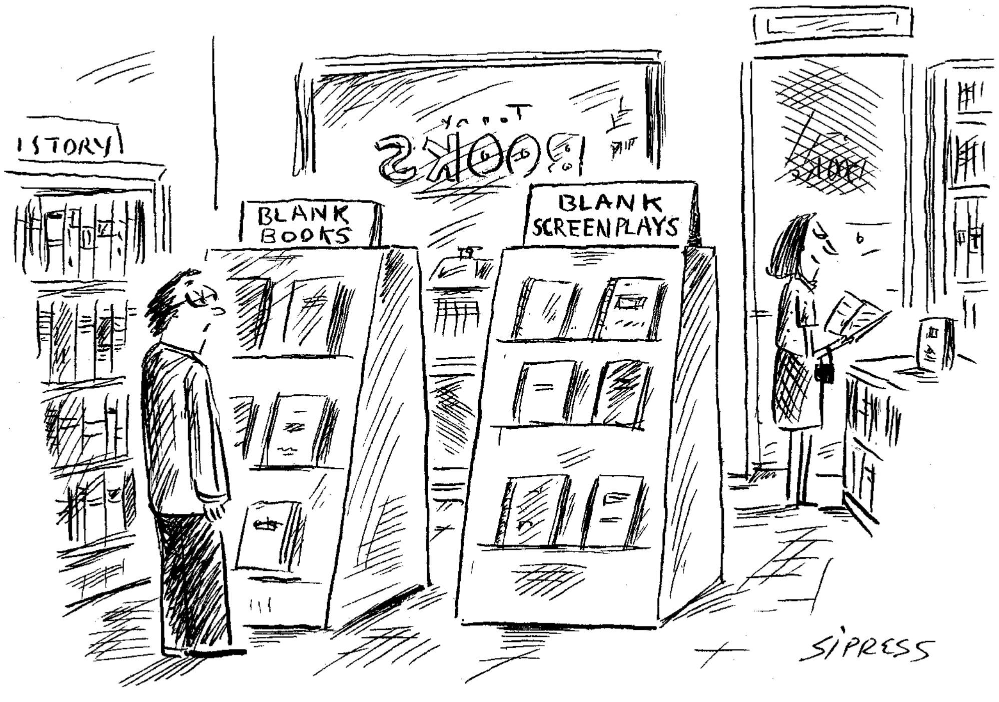
I continued, forlornly, to touch the button on the floor. For a while, when Hastert saw me doing this, he flipped the master switch and let me pretend to sound the siren. But he had a truck to drive and adoring former students and neighbors to greet, and eventually he forgot about the siren. I kept pushing the button, trying to sound the alarm, to no avail. I had only one job, and I was prevented from doing even this. My sympathy for the Democrats in the House grew suddenly vivid.

"Hello! Hi, folks. How you doin'? Hi, folks. Hi, folks. How you doin'? Hi, folks."

"Hey, Denny, you got a license for that thing? Heh, heh, heh."

"Yeah, it's antique. Just like me!"

The blue dress shirt and Polo chinos that Hastert was wearing were a good



look for him. He seemed physically happy in himself, a compelling presence; you wanted to put your arms around him. He typically wins his elections with seventy per cent of the vote. In Yorkville, half the adults seemed to know him personally, but even in Aurora, where he drove his truck in a second parade, an hour later, the paradegoers were delighted to see him. He was utterly absorbed in his performance, like a farm kid mowing his first field with a tractor.

“I love driving,” he said.

THE VISITING

I suffer from insomnia, from loneliness I sleep;
in the midst of the talk and the laughter
all at once you are there—

Hour of waking up and writhing
with humiliation, or
of wishes answered before

one was aware of what they were.
And let me ask you this: the dead,
where *aren’t* they?

Hour when the ones who can’t rest
go to bed, and the ones
who can’t wake go to work—

Dark blue morning glory
I reach to touch, there is another world
and it is this world.

Then the light streamed in yellow
and blue through long windows, and blood
turned to wine in my veins.

Tears of wine
rode down my cheek.
It’s happening, I thought,

though it had never happened
before. I squeezed
my eyes closed, gazing into

a darkness all of light. The more
you tried to hold it back, the more
sweetly and irresistibly it arrived.

—*Franz Wright*

In the farm country west of the Fox River, the cornfields are punctuated by groves of round-crowned oak trees that are like trees in dreams, blackly green, substantial, self-sufficient. The blocky old farmhouses reflect both the square grids of the surrounding fields and section lines and the foursquare conservative values of the farmers who built them. Hastert’s own two hundred acres, near the town of Plano, straddle Little Rock Creek and encompass dense woods and seldom-mown meadows. His garage is an idyll of personal iconography. Above a workbench hangs a neon sign, a Christmas present from Bill Paxon, that says “HASTERT” in blue and “LINCOLN” in red. Hastert’s collection of old Lincolns includes a 1941 Continental that refers not only to his favorite President but also to his own year of birth and to his father, who drove the same model when Hastert was a boy.

In the house, an oversized post-and-beam of recent vintage, we ran into Jean. She’s shy, apple-cheeked, athletic-looking. “We didn’t see you over there in Yorkville,” Hastert said.

She smiled and looked at the floor. “Well, I got sidetracked.”

“Did you go to the parade?”

She smiled more intensely, as if with embarrassment. “No, we got sidetracked. I was out with my golfing friends, and we went to breakfast.”

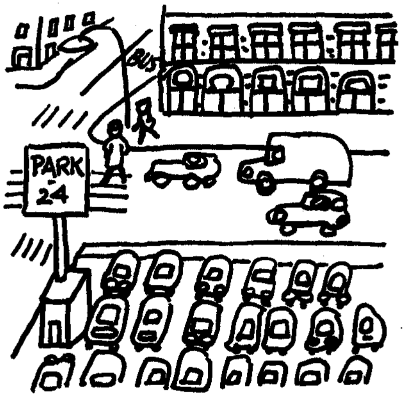
If you’re a public figure, especially one who has risen to unexpectedly great heights, and if you aspire to humility and to remaining the person you always were, it’s a great gift to have a spouse who isn’t thrilled that you’re a public figure. Precisely because Jean Hastert wants as little as possible to do with Washington—at times, her vocal lack of interest in the place verges on disdain—she is the perfect wife for Hastert. “Here,” she told me, “I’m married to Denny Hastert, not to the Speaker of the House.” Even before he became Speaker, it didn’t work for her to be in Washington. “There would be an event,” she said, “and he’d say, ‘O.K., I’ll be done at six o’clock.’ Then it would be six-thirty. And then it would be seven o’clock. I said, ‘That’s O.K., that’s not a problem.’ But I would hate to do that every night. Here, I have my own life, and when he’s there it doesn’t matter if he has sixteen-hour days—I’m not waiting.” If she did move to Washington, Jean said, he would still be back in Illinois every weekend, and she would be stuck in Washington by herself.

She would, however, have the company of her older son, Joshua, who is now in Washington seven days a week. Having tried his hand at small business (he once had an indie record store named Seven Dead Arson), Joshua now works for the lobbying firm Podesta Mattoon, which is run by Tony Podesta, who knew Denny through student government in the nineteen-sixties, and by Dan Mattoon, a longtime friend of Hastert’s who ran his first congressional campaign. When I met Joshua at a pub called the Dubliner, he was wearing a Cubs cap and a T-shirt with an image of Charles Baudelaire. He has a reddish goatee and his mother's apple cheeks, and although he's twenty-eight he looked hardly old enough to be drinking the shandy he was holding. He recently registered as a Republican for the first time; there was an empty piercehole in both of his ears. Even now, as a consultant to defense contractors, he's an ardent fan of alt country. He recommended a two-CD compilation from Bloodshot Records, which, believe it or not, he said, I could probably find at Best Buy. He told me that when he was growing up in Yorkville he spent all his money on trips to Chicago and entrance to clubs and concerts there. That he continues to be a big fan of the Mekons—by his estimate, he has seen various Mekons play in Chicago twenty times—puts an interesting spin on his conservatism, given that the Mekons are among the most trenchantly leftist bands on earth. Even if you miss their lyrics, in their onstage patter they routinely eviscerate the Bush family, Big Oil, and big business in general. How can a young Republican love the Mekons? Joshua explained how. Like the Mekons, he hates big business. Like his father, he loves small business, and part of his job, as he described it, is to teach smaller defense contractors, the ones who are taking on the Big Four contractors, to navigate the shoals of Washington.

While Joshua happily listens to the Waco Brothers (a Mekon side project) in Washington, his father shuttles back to Illinois every weekend. On Saturday mornings, he drops in at his friend Loren Miller's auto-restoration shop, where there's a framed photomontage of Hastert relaxing in a chair and Miller speaking on the telephone ("I'm sorry, Mr. President, the Speaker's not available") and a big framed picture of Miller and his wife with the Hasterts on the Speaker's Porch of the Capitol, all of them looking rather warm. ("I was, like, 'Why would I want to go out there for the Fourth of July?' " Jean said. "And he said, 'Well, just one time we'll sit up on the balcony and watch the fireworks.' It was *so hot*. I didn't ask him the next year to do that again.") Miller's friendship with Hastert dates from the mid-eighties, when Hastert went to Washington and began, back at home, to acquire vintage trucks and Lincolns. "I'm not much for politics," Miller said. "If there's something about Denny in the paper, I'll read it. But I don't get the *Tribune*." For several years, after Hastert became Speaker, the Millers and the Hasterts went out for dinner almost every weekend. "I never asked him to go out," Miller said. "It was always him who called me."

A man who wins reëlection by two-to-one margins doesn't have to go home *every* weekend. Hastert's friendship with Miller, like his collection of old cars and trucks, seems to have burgeoned as a kind of counterweight to his new life in politics. Washington, where he thrives during the week, is a brutal, modern place of metastasizing leadership responsibilities and techno-economic time bombs like prescription drugs and Medicare. What you see there—a Speaker who delivers the Republican goods—really is what you get. It doesn't matter, in the public realm, what kind of person Hastert is. It matters only privately that, to do the brutal work in Washington, he requires psychic ballast back in Illinois.

The ballast is a complicated and closed system of sentimental pictographs and personal loyalties. Hastert's younger brother, David, drives a truck for the state of Illinois. His youngest brother, Chris, used to work in the food business, taught middle school in Aurora for many years, and is now beginning a new career in Mendota, Illinois, as a salesman for Scott Wood and Metal, a heating-and-cooling business that his father once owned a part of. On a counter in the company's front office, amid invoices and duct-working tools and chaste cheesecake calendars, I saw a library copy of "Atlas Shrugged," which Chris is reading on the fervent recommendation of Denny's very conservative younger son, Ethan. Chris has exactly the same laugh as Joshua does, and, like Josh, he is a Republican of recent vintage. The little black-and-white Scott Wood and Metal sign outside the office in Mendota is identical to the sign on Gastville Road, a one-block street in Oswego where Chris still lives part of the time in the rambling, much-added-onto house where the Hastert boys grew up. The house next door, which his father bought for his in-laws, is now David's home.



If this were all you saw of Hastert country, you could pretend you were still in a small-town world. At the end of Gastville Road, though, right past the fence on the Hasterts' property line, a wave of development is rolling across the cornfields. The leading edge of this wave is wrapped in Tyvek. Behind it come pastel mansions and town houses, crowded together on flat and treeless streets. Farther east, along the tollway into Naperville, the wave is already cresting, traffic flowing majestically through wide canyons of glass and air-conditioning, a glowing world of screens and cables. You can escape the wave, for the moment, by driving west toward Plano, but the cornfields along the way, seen in the light of modernity, take on a different aspect—become fields of ethanol, fields of supersized Pepsi, fields of bioengineering, fields of agribusiness subsidies. One landmark that Hastert's staffers use to find the turnoff to his house is a half-finished reinforced-concrete water tower. A big candy-striped pipe protrudes from the tower vertically, like a drinking straw in a fifteen-story champagne glass. The message the tower sends is unmistakable: development coming. The tower is there ahead of the graders, ahead of the DayGlo surveyors' stakes, ahead of the congestion and the road-widening projects, ahead of the Indian-American soccer moms and the Hispanic fans of Jay Leno and the hip-hop-crazy children who'll see the trees grow up around the pastel mansions and town houses; but only just barely ahead. ♦

PERSONAL HISTORY

THE CHALLENGE

A young writer proves himself.

BY GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ

I never imagined that, nine months after I had completed secondary school, my first story would be published in *Fin de Semana*, the weekend literary supplement of *El Espectador*, in Bogotá, and the most interesting and demanding literary publication of the time. Forty-two days later, my second story was published. The most surprising thing for me, however, was an introductory note by the editor of the supplement, Eduardo Zalamea Borda (whose pen name was Ulises), the most lucid Colombian critic at the time, and the one who was most alert to the appearance of new trends.

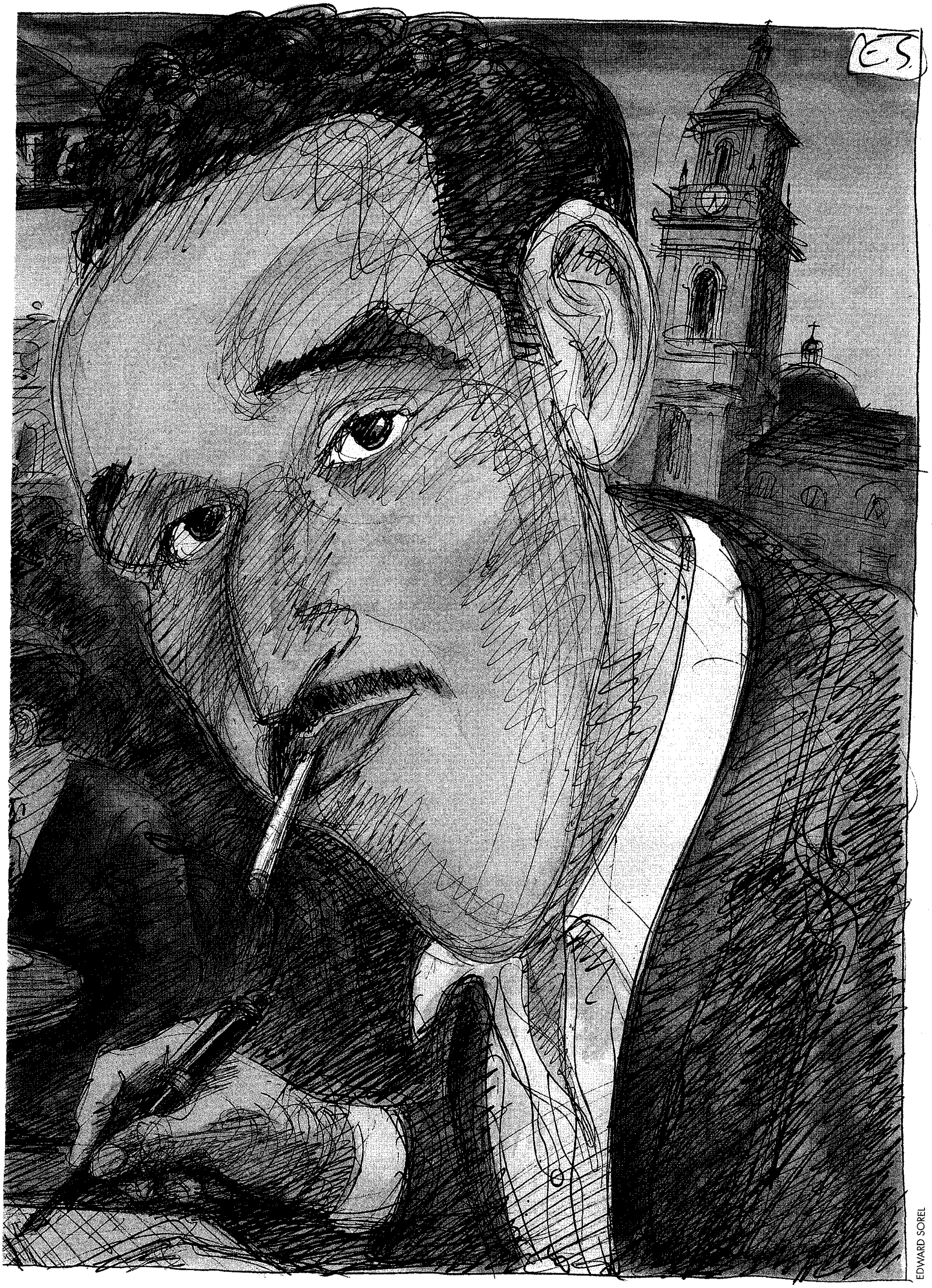
The way in which all this happened was so unexpected that it is not easy to recount. In February of 1947, I matriculated in the faculty of law at the Universidad Nacional of Bogotá, as my parents and I had agreed. I lived at the very center of the city, in a *pensión* on Calle Florián which was occupied for the most part by students who were, like me, from the Atlantic Coast. On free afternoons, instead of working to support myself, I read either in my room or in the cafés that permitted it. The books I read I obtained by chance and luck, and they depended more on chance than on any luck of mine, because the friends who could afford to buy them lent them to me for such limited periods that I stayed awake for nights on end in order to return them on time. But, unlike the books I had read at school, in Zipaquirá, which belonged in a mausoleum of consecrated authors, these were like bread warm from the oven, printed in Buenos Aires in new translations after the long publishing hiatus caused by the Second World War. In this way, I discovered, to my good fortune, the already very much discovered Jorge Luis Borges, D. H. Lawrence and Aldous Huxley, Graham Greene and G. K. Chesterton, William Irish and Katherine Mansfield, and many others.

For the most part, these new works were displayed in the unreachable windows of bookstores, but some copies circulated in the student cafés, which were active centers of cultural dissemination for university students from the provinces. Many of those students reserved their tables year after year and received mail and even money orders at the cafés. Favors from the proprietors or their trusted employees were instrumental in saving a good number of university careers, and quite a few professionals in the country may owe more to their café connections than they do to their almost invisible tutors.

My favorite café was El Molino, the one frequented by older poets, which was only two hundred metres or so from my *pensión*, on the corner of Avenida Jiménez de Quesada and Carrera Séptima. Students were not allowed to reserve seats at El Molino, but we could be sure of learning more from the literary conversations we eavesdropped on as we huddled at nearby tables and learning it better than in textbooks. It was an enormous café, elegant in the Spanish style, and its walls had been decorated by the painter Santiago Martínez Delgado with episodes from Don Quixote's battle against the windmills. Though I did not have a reserved place, I always arranged for the waiters to put me as close as possible to the master León de Greiff—bearded, gruff, charming—who would begin his *tertulia*, his literary talk, at dusk with some of the most famous writers of the day, and end it with his chess students at midnight, awash in cheap liquor. Very few of the great names in the country's arts and letters did not sit at that table at least once, and we played dead at ours in order not to miss a single word. Although they tended to talk more about women

"I suppose you realize the trouble you got yourself into," a friend said. "Now you're in the showcase of recognized writers, and there's a lot you have to do to deserve it."

EL MOLINO
EL ESPECTADOR



EDWARD SOREL

and political intrigues than about their art or work, they always said something that was new to us.

The most attentive of us were from the Atlantic Coast, united less by Caribbean conspiracies against the *Cachacos*—people from the sierra—than by the vice of books. One day Jorge Álvaro Espinosa, a law student who had taught me to navigate the Bible and made me learn by heart the names of Job's companions, placed an awesome tome on the table in front of me and declared, with the authority of a bishop, "This is the other Bible."

It was, of course, James Joyce's "Ulysses," which I read in bits and pieces and fits and starts until I lost all patience. This was premature brashness. Years later, as a docile adult, I set myself the task of reading it again in a serious way, and it not only resulted in the discovery of a genuine world that I had never suspected inside me but also provided me with invaluable technical help in freeing language and handling time and structure in my own books.

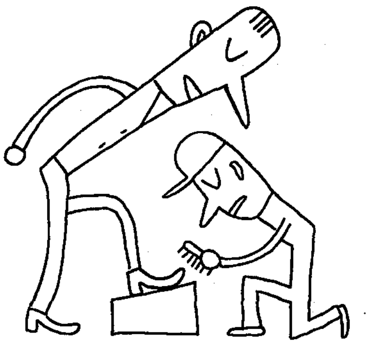
One of my roommates at the *pensión* was Domingo Manuel Vega, a medical student who had been my friend ever since our boyhood days in the town of Sucre and who shared my voracity for reading. One night, Vega came in with three books that he had just bought, and he lent me one, chosen at random, as he often did, to help me sleep. But this time the effect was just the opposite: I never slept with my former serenity again. The book was Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis"—in the translation published by Losada in Buenos Aires—and it determined a new direction for my life from its opening line, recognized today as one of the great devices in world literature: "As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect."

These were mysterious books whose dangerous precipices were not only different from but often contrary to everything I had known until then. They showed me that it was not necessary to demonstrate facts: it was enough for the author to have written something for it to be true, with no proof other than the power of his talent and the authority of his voice. It was Scheherazade all over again—not in her millenary world, where everything was possible, but in an irreparable world, where everything had already been lost.

When I finished reading "The Metamorphosis," I felt an irresistible longing to live in that alien paradise. The new day found me at the portable typewriter that Domingo Manuel Vega had lent me, trying to write something that would resemble Kafka's tale of a poor bureaucrat turned into an enormous cockroach. In the days that followed I did not go to the university for fear the spell would be broken, and I continued, sweating drops of envy, until Eduardo Zalamea Borda published in his pages a disconsolate article lamenting the lack of memorable names among the new generation of Colombian writers, and the fact that he could detect nothing in the future that might remedy the situation. I do not know with what right I felt challenged, in the name of my generation, by the provocation in that piece, but I took up the story again in an attempt to prove him wrong. I elaborated on the plot idea of the conscious corpse in "The Metamorphosis," but relieved the story of its false mysteries and ontological prejudices.

Still, I felt so uncertain that I did not dare talk it over with any of my tablemates at El Molino. Not even with Gonzalo Mallarino, my fellow-student at the faculty of law, who was the only reader of the lyrical prose pieces I wrote to help me endure the tedium of my classes. I reread and corrected my story until I was exhausted, and at last I wrote a personal note to Eduardo Zalamea—whom I had never seen—of which I cannot recall even a single word. I put everything in an envelope and took it in person to reception at *El Espectador*. The concierge authorized me to go up to the second floor and hand the letter to Zalamea himself, but I was paralyzed at the mere idea. I left the envelope on the concierge's desk and fled.

This happened on a Tuesday, and I was not troubled by any presentiments regarding the fate of my story. I was certain that, in the event it was published, it would not happen very soon. In the meantime, for two weeks, I rambled and roamed from café to café to allay my Saturday-afternoon apprehension, until September 13th, when I went into El Molino and collided with the title of my story printed across the full width of *El Espectador*, which had just come out: "The Third Resignation."



My first reaction was the devastating realization that I did not have five centavos to buy the paper. This was the most explicit symbol of my poverty, because, in addition to the newspaper, many basic things in daily life cost five centavos: the trolley, the public telephone, a cup of coffee, a shoeshine. I rushed out to the street with no protection against the imperturbable drizzle, but in the nearby cafés there was no one I knew who could give me a charitable coin. And I did not find anyone in the *pensión* at that dead hour on a Saturday except the landlady, which was the same as not finding anyone, because I owed her seven hundred and twenty times five centavos for two months of room and board. When I went out again, prepared for anything, I encountered a man sent by Divine Providence: he was getting out of a cab, holding *El Espectador* in his hand, and I asked him straight out if he would give it to me.

And so I read my first story in print, with an illustration by Hernán Merino, the official sketch artist for the paper. I read it in a single breath, hiding in my room, my heart pounding. In each line I discovered the crushing power of print, for what I had constructed with so much love and pain as a humble imitation of a universal genius was revealed to me as an obscure, weak monologue, barely sustained by three or four consolatory sentences. Almost twenty years went by before I dared to read it a second time, and my judgment then—untempered by compassion—was even less indulgent.

The most difficult thing was the avalanche of friends who invaded my room with copies of the newspaper and glowing praise for a story that I was sure they had not understood. Among my fellow-students at the university, some appreciated it, others were puzzled by it, and others with more reason did not read past the fourth line, but Gonzalo Mallarino, whose literary judgment it was not easy for me to question, admired it without reservation.

My greatest uneasiness had to do with the verdict of Jorge Álvaro Espinosa, whose critical blade was dangerous even beyond our immediate circle. I had contradictory feelings: I wanted to see him right away to resolve my uncertainty once and for all, but at the same time the idea of facing him terrified me. He disappeared until Tuesday, which was not unusual for an insatiable reader, and when he reappeared at El Molino he began talking to me not about the story but about my audacity.

"I suppose you realize the trouble you got yourself into," he said, fixing his green king-cobra eyes on mine. "Now you're in the showcase of recognized writers, and there's a lot you have to do to deserve it."

His was the only opinion that could affect me as much as that of Ulises, and I was petrified. But before he finished speaking I decided to preëmpt him with what I considered then, and have always considered since, to be the truth: "That story is a piece of shit."

He replied with immutable control that he could not say anything yet because he had had time only to glance at it. But he explained that, even if it was as bad as I said, it was not bad enough for me to sacrifice the golden opportunity that life was offering me.

"In any case, that story already belongs to the past," he concluded. "What matters now is the next one."

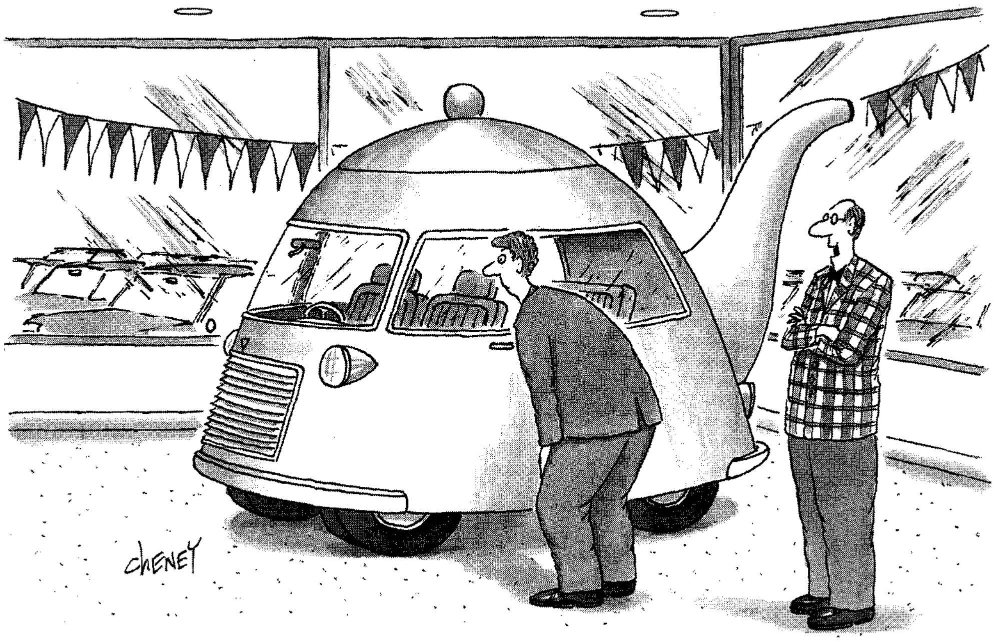
I was flabbergasted and foolish enough to look for arguments to the contrary, until I understood that no advice I heard would be more intelligent than his. He expounded on his unshakable idea that you had to conceive of the story first and then the style, but that each depended on the other in a kind of mutual servitude that was the magic wand of the classics. He also spent some time on his opinion, which he had often repeated, that I needed to read the Greeks in a profound, unbiased way, and not just Homer—the only one I had read, because I was required to for the baccalaureate. I promised I would, and I wanted to hear other names, but he changed the subject and began to talk instead about André Gide's "The Counterfeiters," which he had read that weekend. I never found the courage to tell him that our conversation might well have determined the course of my life. I stayed up all night making notes for my next story, which would not have the meanders of the first.

LOW TIDE
DAILY BUGLE

I suspected that those who talked to me about the story were impressed less by the story itself—which they had perhaps not read and had, I was sure, not understood—than by its being published with such unusual fanfare on so important a page. To begin with, I realized that my two great defects were the two greatest defects possible: the clumsiness of my writing and my ignorance of the human heart. And both were more than evident in my first story, which was a confused, abstract meditation made worse by my abuse of invented emotions.

Searching my memory for situations from real life for the second story, I remembered that one of the most beautiful women I had known as a child had told me she wished she could be inside the very handsome cat that she was caressing on her lap. I asked her why, and she answered, "Because it is more beautiful than I am." This gave me a point of departure for the second story, as well as an attractive title: "Eva Is Inside Her Cat." The rest, like the previous story, was invented out of nothing and, for the same reason—as we liked to say in those days—it carried within itself the seeds of its own destruction.

This story was published with the same fanfare as the first, on Saturday, October 25, 1947, and illustrated by the painter Enrique Grau, a rising star in the Caribbean sky. I was struck that my friends accepted this as a routine occurrence and me as a renowned writer. I, on the other hand, suffered over the errors, doubted the successes, but managed to keep my hope alive. The high point came a few days later, when Eduardo Zalamea, employing his usual pseudonym, Ulises,



"Its only emission is water vapor."

wrote a note in his daily column in *El Espectador*. It went straight to the point: "Readers of *Fin de Semana*, the literary supplement of this newspaper, will have noted the appearance of a new and original talent with a vigorous personality." And farther on: "In the imagination anything can happen, but knowing how to show with naturalness, simplicity, and without fuss the pearl produced there is not something that all twenty-year-old boys just beginning their relationship with letters can accomplish." And he concluded without hesitation: "In García Márquez a new and notable writer has been born."

The note brought me a shock of happiness—how could it not!—but at the same time it disturbed me that Zalamea had not left himself any way out. Now that he had said what he had said, I was obliged to interpret his generosity as a call to my conscience that would last the rest of my life.

In spite of my chronic absenteeism and judicial negligence, I passed the easy first-year law courses thanks to overheated last-minute cramming, and the more difficult ones by using my old trick of eluding the question with clever devices. The truth is, I was not comfortable in my own skin and did not know how to continue groping my way along that dead-end street. I understood the law less and had much less interest in it than in any of the subjects I had studied at the *liceo*, and I felt I was enough of an adult to make my own decisions. In short, after sixteen months of miraculous survival, all I had gained was a group of good friends for the rest of my life.

My scant interest in the law was even scantier after the note by Ulises appeared. At the university, some of the other students began to call me Maestro and to introduce me as a writer. This coincided with my resolve to learn how to construct a story that was both credible and fantastic but had no cracks. I had several ideal distant models, such as Sophocles' "Oedipus Rex," whose protagonist investigates the murder of his father only to discover that he himself is the murderer; "The Monkey's Paw," by W. W. Jacob, the perfect story in which everything that happens is accidental; Maupassant's "Boule de Suif"; and so many other great sinners, may God keep them in His holy kingdom.

I was involved in this one Sunday night when at last something happened to me that deserved to be recounted. I had spent almost the entire day venting my frustrations as a writer with Gonzalo Mallarino at his house on Avenida Chile, and when I was returning to the *pensión* on the last streetcar a flesh-and-blood faun got on at the Chapinero station. No mistake: I said a faun. I noticed that none of the few passengers on the streetcar at midnight seemed surprised to see him, and this made me think that he was just one of the men in costume who sold a variety of things on Sundays in the children's parks. But reality convinced me that I should have no doubts: his horns and beard were as wild as those of a goat, and when he passed by me I could smell the stink of his pelt. With the manners of a good paterfamilias, he got off before Calle 26, the street where the cemetery was, and disappeared among the trees in the park.

After half a night of being awakened by my tossing and turning, Domingo Manuel Vega asked me what was wrong. "It's just that a faun got on the streetcar," I told him, half asleep. He was wide awake when he replied that if it was a nightmare it must be due to the poor digestion typical of Sundays, but if it was the subject for my next story he thought it was fantastic. The next morning, I did not know if I had seen a faun on the streetcar or if it had been a Sunday hallucination. I began by admitting to myself that I had fallen asleep, tired at the end of the day, and had a dream that was so vivid I could not separate it from reality. But, in the end, the essential thing for me was not whether the faun had been real but that I lived the experience as if he were. And for the same reason, real or dreamed, it was not legitimate to consider this as a bewitchment of the imagination; it was, in effect, a marvellous experience in my life.

I wrote the story the next day in one sitting, put it under my pillow, and read it and reread it for several nights before I went to sleep and in the mornings when I woke up. It was a bare, literal transcription of the episode on the streetcar, just as it had occurred and in a style as innocent as that of a baptism announcement on the society page. At last, hounded by new doubts, I decided to submit it to the infallible test of print, not in *El Espectador* but in the literary supplement of *El Tiempo*. Perhaps this was a way for me to face a judgment different from that of Eduardo Zalamea, and not involve him in an adventure that he had no reason to share. I sent the story with a friend from the *pensión*, along with a letter for Don Jaime Posada, the new and very young editor of the *Suplemento Literario* of *El Tiempo*. But the story was not published and my letter was not answered.

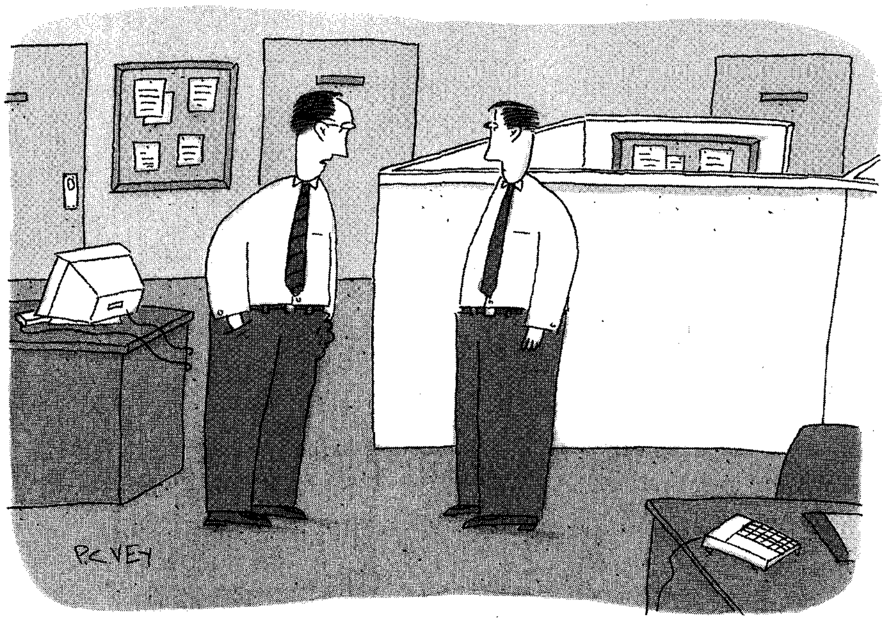
The publications in *El Espectador*, on the margins of literary success, created other, more terrestrial and amusing problems for me. Misguided friends would stop me in the street to ask for the loans that would save them, since they could not believe that a writer presented with so much prominence had not received enormous sums for his stories. Very few believed me when I told them the truth: I had never been paid a centavo for the stories and had not expected to be, because that was not the custom in the country's press. Even more serious was my papa's disappointment when he realized I could not take over my own expenses at a time when three of his eleven children were in school. The family sent me thirty pesos a month. The *pensión* alone cost me eighteen, with no right to eggs at breakfast, and I always found myself obliged to dip into that money for unforeseen expenses. I do not know where I had acquired the habit of making unconscious sketches in the margins of newspapers, on the napkins in restaurants, on the marble tables in cafés. But a casual acquaintance from El Molino, who had enough influence at a ministry to be placed as a draftsman without having the slightest idea how to draw, proposed that I do his work for him and we divide the salary. Never again in my life was I so close to being corrupted, but not so close that I repented.

My interest in music also grew at this time, as the popular songs of the Caribbean—which I had taken in with my mother's milk—were making their way into Bogotá. The radio program with the largest audience was "The Coastal Hour," hosted by Don Pascual Delvecchio, a kind of musical ambassador from the Atlantic Coast. It aired on Sunday mornings and became so popular that we students from the Caribbean would go to the offices of the radio station to dance until late in the afternoon. That program was the origin of the immense popularity of our music in the interior of the country, and later in its most remote corners; it even provided students from the coast with a means of social advancement in Bogotá.

The only disadvantage for Caribbean students in the capital was the spectre of forced marriage. I do not know what wicked precedents had advanced the coastal belief that the girls in Bogotá were loose with boys from the coast and set traps for us in bed so that we would be obliged to marry them. And they did this not for love but because they hoped to live with a window facing the sea. I never believed it. On the contrary, the most disagreeable memories of my life are of the sinister brothels on the outskirts of Bogotá, where we would go to drain away our gloomy bouts of drunkenness. In the most sordid of them, I almost left behind the little life I had in me when a woman I had just been with appeared naked in the corridor, shouting that I had stolen twelve pesos from a drawer in her dressing table. Two thugs from the house knocked me down, and, not satisfied with emptying my pockets of the two pesos I had left after a session of ruinous lovemaking, they stripped me of everything, including my shoes, to search every inch for the stolen money. They had decided not to kill me but to turn me over to the police when the woman remembered that she had changed her hiding place the day before, and she found the money there, intact.

Not long after that, I decided at last not to go on wasting time in the faculty of law, but I did not have the courage to confront my parents once and for all. They told me they were so satisfied with the results of my baccalaureate and my first year as a law student that they sent me—in the care of my brother Luis Enrique, who had come to Bogotá and found a good job in February, 1948—the most lightweight and modern typewriter on the market as a surprise gift. It was the first typewriter I ever owned, and also the most unfortunate, because that same day we pawned it for twelve pesos in order to continue a welcoming party with my brother and my friends from the *pensión*. The next day, with aching heads, we went to the pawnshop to make certain that the typewriter was still there with its seals unbroken, and to insure that it would remain in good condition until the money to redeem it rained down on us from Heaven. We had a good opportunity with what my friend the false draftsman paid me, but at the last minute we decided to put off redeeming it. Each time my brother and I passed the pawnshop, together or alone, we would confirm from the street that the typewriter was still there, wrapped like a jewel in cellophane paper with an organdy bow, among rows of well-protected household appliances. After a month, the joyous calculations we had made in the euphoria of our drunkenness were still unfulfilled, but the typewriter was safe and sound in its place and could remain there for as long as we paid the quarterly interest. ♦

(*Translated, from the Spanish, by Edith Grossman.*)

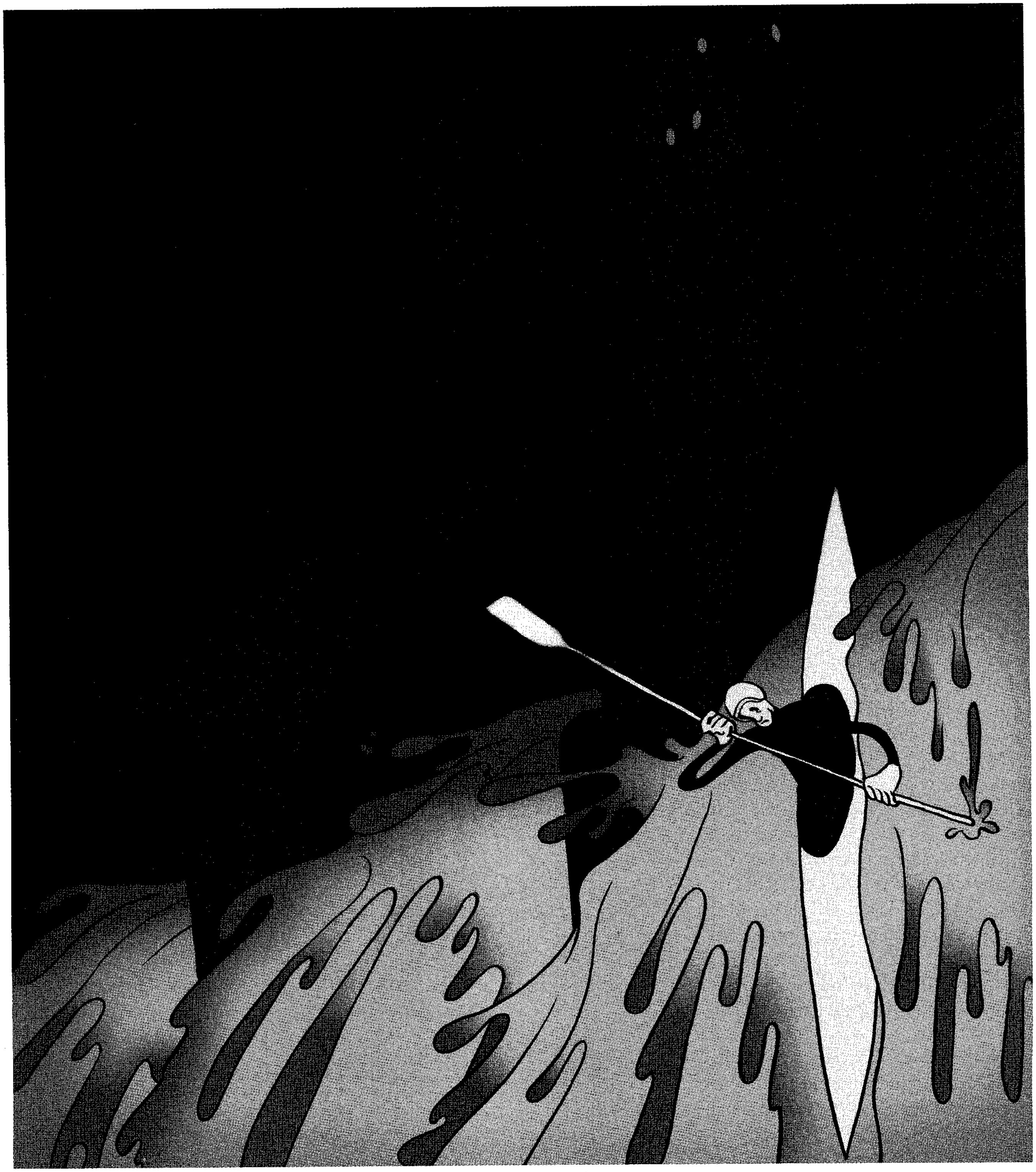


"I really didn't enjoy working five days a week, fifty weeks a year for forty years, but I needed the money."

FICTION

IN DEFIANCE OF CLUB RULES

BY TIM PARKS



In defiance of club rules, Robert took to going out on the river alone. It had become difficult to fit in with other people's plans. Arthur's wife was about to give birth, and this hitherto loyal friend now had no time. To go on the group outings would mean hanging around for hours waiting for others to arrive and argue about what they were going to do and where. Instead, after work, Robert drove straight to the club, pulled his kayak down from the rack, and changed into his wetsuit.

This was January. There was even a patch of ice in the slacker shallows. Immediately, he noticed that going out alone changed his state of mind. He was doubly anxious sorting out his kit as he got into the boat. He checked and re-checked that his life jacket was properly buckled. Sitting on the muddy bank, he ran his fingers around the cockpit at least three or four times before feeling reassured that the spray deck was secure. Did he have the paddle the right way round? He placed his hands on either side of the boat and pushed off.

Just upstream of the club, the boys who competed in slaloms were running the gates beneath the so-called New Bridge in their long fibreglass boats. Robert wasn't interested in competing with anyone. The only thing he wanted to measure himself against was the river. He had a short plastic whitewater kayak. And the first thing he did was paddle it to the middle of the river and turn upside down. The icy water gripped his head. It was dark and muddy. This, as far as Robert was concerned, was the defining experience of kayaking. You were alone, unseeing, unhearing. You couldn't breathe. You had a handful of seconds to return yourself to the normal world. Robert counted to at least three before coming up. It was important not to concede to the darkness that you were afraid. I am not in a panic or a hurry, he told himself. He set up his paddle carefully and rolled up. The water streamed off him. There was the shock of the breeze on his face, then a rapid warming. He was master of the river.

He set off downstream toward the railway bridge. Often, to loosen up, he paddled backward, which gave him a view of the center of town. The high red brick embankment curved away to the left. There were pretty stone towers from centuries before, steep hills rising to walls and battlements, and, on a clear day, the mountains were just visible in sharp relief behind. The almost daily experience of this view reconciled Robert to his home town and induced a mood of acceptance and calm. For some years now, since even before his father's death, he had been increasingly disaffected with the place. He had been passed over for promotion at work. The area he lived in had been invaded by immigrants. Drug addicts left their needles in the gutters. He had seen his mother grow fearful and bitter. You mustn't go out in the boat on your own, she told him. You are all I have in the world now. The river is safer than the streets, Robert replied.

After the bridge where the ring road passed, marking the end of the town proper, he was obliged to turn and paddle forward. The river flowed a little faster now. The bank was untended, snagged with broken branches, bits of rubble, rusted iron. Occasionally the paddle scraped a block of cement. Sometimes there were fishermen, usually old. The man who haunted the right bank just downstream of the bridge must have been a thalidomide case. He gestured with a shrunken arm to show Robert where his line was. Robert steered clear. He couldn't imagine eating the fish from this river. On the left bank, truck drivers in the slow traffic were high enough in their cabs to watch him over the parapet. He imagined them envying his freedom. Some waved. Sometimes the lovers sitting on the steps halfway along would break off their kisses. If he was in a good mood, he would capsize and roll up for them. Exhibitionist! his fiancée teased. He and Stella had been together for almost ten years now. Robert needs the river, she confided to their friends. He has so much frustrated energy. Show your biceps, Rob, she said. Neither of them was in a hurry to marry. An uneasy inertia had overtaken Robert's life. He was angry without even being aware of it.

Under the railway bridge, the club's rule about not going out alone made sense. But this was the only place Robert wanted to be. Carrying four tracks, the bridge was built as a viaduct, its five tall arches channelling the wide river into five narrow streams, with thick walls of masonry in between. At the same time, the water level fell almost three feet, so that with the sudden narrowing, plus the dive, the placid surface was transformed, for the twenty yards or so that it took to get through the tunnels of the arches, into a wild rush. This was most pronounced beneath the second arch from the right, where the drop coincided exactly with the beginning of the tunnel. Here, a strong V-shaped wave formed beneath the nineteenth-century masonry, powerful and irregular. At either side of the wave, great blocks of stone, placed just above water level to protect the bridge's stanchions, allowed for the formation of narrow lateral eddies of escape and refuge. After the frothing crest of the big wave, the stream swirled through the long arch in a tumultuous chain of lesser waves before tumbling out into a broad boiling expanse beyond, where sudden whirlpools could suck the boat under, front or back, before you had time to think.

There were all kinds of games to play here. When the water was high, the stream throbbed beneath the kayak. Pointing downward into the wave, face upstream, you had a fantastic impression of speed. The river was pouring onto you, and you had to fight like mad to hold your position, curving to left and right, braking with a low brace when the nose sank in the trough, paddling hard on the crest when the water threatened to toss you out. Riding this wave, forced into a fury of concentration after his dull hours at the office, Robert had the exhilarating sensation of being right at the heart of life, in the secret pulse of the river, yet at the same time wonderfully static, in control. Sometimes a train thundered above as he surfed, packing his brain with noise and excitement.

But it was hard to stay on the wave for more than thirty or forty seconds at a time. Perhaps you exposed a little too much edge on one side or the other, or you let the bow sink too deep into the trough, or the wave itself suddenly changed with a hiccup in the current. Then all of a sudden you were blown off and careering down the wild water be-

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hind it. Often the fight to stay on the crest led to a capsize. Then you had to roll up in earnest. The swift current grabbed your paddle beneath the water. It was hard to drag it forward to the set-up position. Toward the end of the bridge on the left, there was a rock that might catch your helmet. Altogether, there were seven bouncy waves to get through before the stream spread out and steadied. Sometimes the best thing to do was just wait till you were past the roller coaster, then come up in the muddled water beyond. It irritated Robert when it took him two, or even three, tries to roll up. He knew that one day he would fail and have to take a swim. He would have to save himself, his boat, and his paddle all on his own.

Upright, he fought his way back up the narrow eddy along the inside of the arch and tackled the wave again. After half an hour, he might take a break. He got out of the boat below the bridge and sat on the blocks of stone that protected its masonry. There was a strong river smell here. Occasionally he saw a rat hurrying through the sodden vegetation. Men loading trucks behind a factory on the right bank might turn to watch. Robert nodded to them.

He began to like going out on his own so much that he felt vaguely annoyed, in March and April, when he arrived at the bridge to find some of his old companions already there, riding the wave, shouting Whoa! and Alrighty! They shook their heads at the idea of his being there alone. Sometimes, they said, a piece of debris could form a strainer under the water. Upside down, you might get tangled in a branch that had jammed in the rocks.

The other canoe-club members who played at the bridge drove down in their cars, unloaded their kayaks, had a good time, keeping careful watch on one another, loaded up again, and drove back. They didn't like the long, dull paddle from the clubhouse or, above all, the fact that to get home you had to carry your boat upstream of the bridge and then fight the current for almost a mile. On the other hand, there was a risk in driving down; on two or three occasions, club members' cars had been broken into while they were paddling. The bank beyond the factory was quite isolated, and there was a Gypsy camp on the wasteland a few hundred yards farther on. Robert preferred to paddle back to the club. It kept him fit. So, once he decided he'd had enough, he pulled his boat out, dragged it up the high bank, and walked it upstream beyond the drop. It wasn't unusual, on this walk, for him to find a couple of unshaven young men sitting around smoking on the bank beneath the first arch of the bridge, with a fire lit perhaps, their women cross-legged in shawls and shabby dresses, the inevitable baby at their breasts. Sometimes Robert came across a pair of teenagers in sleeping bags, surrounded by sachets and needles. He was careful where he trod in his thin rubber kayak shoes.

When spring turned to summer and the weather grew warmer, a group of Moroccans would often come down to the bank and sit and smoke under the bridge and sometimes bathe in exactly the place where Robert pulled his boat up on the bank. It was really the only place where you could get out of the water easily. Robert never spoke to them. He looked away. Out of the water, his legs stiff from being jammed against the footrests, carrying the heavy kayak on his shoulder, he felt vulnerable. This was a lawless place. There were all kinds of foul smells now that the weather had turned. Without wanting to be racist, Robert intensely disliked Gypsies. They carry knives, he thought. They don't clear up their litter. But farther upstream, where he relaunched, there were a couple of small gardens that backed onto the river and often he saw a pretty mother playing with her young daughter there. Then Robert said hello, and explained to the little girl over the garden wall how the spray deck worked. Goddam druggies, the woman said, nodding toward the bridge. The police never bother them. Robert shrugged. He got into the boat on the bank and let it slide the ten feet down the steep slope into the water. The bow plunged deep, then reared up. The girl cheered and clapped.

Paddling back, he had to keep tight to the embankment, out of the current. Sometimes there were strange, blue-and-yellow birds nesting in the bushes that had burst out of the old brickwork, and on a mud bank just after the bridge that carried the ring road there were always geese and ducks. Once, Robert surprised a troupe of ducklings. They broke right and left in panic. Tiny flies swarmed over the mud and around his face. He reached forward with the paddle, torso swaying in a strong rhythmical stroke. The mother duck squawked and flapped. It wasn't clear to Robert why he hadn't married Stella yet, why he wasn't having a family, like his friend Arthur. Sometimes he and Stella used his member's key to get into the canoe club at night and made love on the floor in the changing room. Lying in the damp dark, with the river flowing by outside, they told themselves they liked this better than finding each other in a soft double bed every night.

Mid-June, the river rose dramatically as the snow melted in the mountains and rushed down to the plain. This was the time to ride the wave. But now there were more and more riffraff enjoying the deep cool beneath the bridge. It was infuriating that the one place in the city Robert loved should be infested like this. One scorching day, three Slavic-looking men were standing on the rocks by the masonry of the second stanchion, right near the wave. They must have waded over from the bank under the first arch where the stream was shallow, then worked their way around the rocks to the second. The men smoked and shouted, and one, wearing only soaking underpants, with a mobile phone in his hand, wanted to speak to Robert. He was laughing, gesturing, stout and mustached. From the signs he made, it seemed that he wanted Robert to lend him his boat, or at least his life jacket for a swim. Robert shook his head. He didn't understand their language. The men were passing around a bottle of something transparent. The current was dangerous. They waved the bottle. Did he want to try? Looking up from the water, Robert shook his head. The man seemed to want to take a photo of him with his mobile phone. He was a fat, heavy fellow, doubtless drunk. He kept leaning forward, grinning behind his mustache, pointing the phone. Robert decided to move to a different arch.

The central passage of the viaduct was just a quick cluttered rapid with no eddies at the side. All you could do here was push the kayak under a certain rock near the middle, where the stream poured over so hard that the boat would be suddenly sucked in and turned up more or less vertically on its nose. It was while Robert was approaching this place that he saw something curious. It was trapped on a rock a little way up the rapid. At first he didn't understand. It was grayish and almost round. It was a bone. Presumably an animal's bone. He got closer, forcing the boat upstream from one small eddy to the next. The thing was jammed between two rocks and water was trickling through it. Now he realized that it was a human skull.

Robert held his kayak steady in the small churn of disturbance behind a half-submerged stone. The skull lay on one side. The jaw was missing. But it clearly was a skull. The water was passing through an eye socket. Though he couldn't have said why, it seemed important to Robert to retrieve it. The position was difficult. The skull was in front of him and to his right, just beyond reach. The water was powerful and cluttered with debris. Leaning the boat onto the rock beside him, unsteady in the line between eddy and stream, Robert raised his paddle in his right hand and swung it at the skull. On the third attempt, he dislodged it. It bounced on the rock below and into the water a good yard away. Switching his paddle to the other hand, he lunged out and grabbed at it. His fingers found it just as the boat capsized.

Here was a situation unprovided for in all the books he had read on kayaking. He was upside down in a swirl of water, helmet scraping on the rocks, with a skull in one hand and his paddle only loosely held in the other. If he took hold of the paddle to roll the kayak upright, he would have to let go of the skull. And he wanted to keep it. He wanted to take it to the authorities. There was some mystery behind it, some missing person.

Underwater, Robert waited a second, until he felt that the boat had been flushed clear of the rocks and the arch. You always have more air than you think. That is a commonplace. He wasn't

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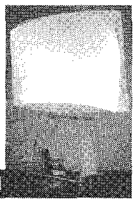

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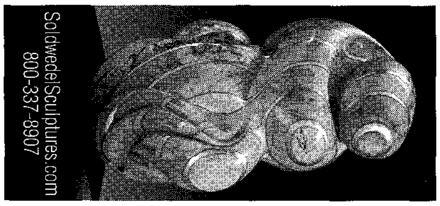

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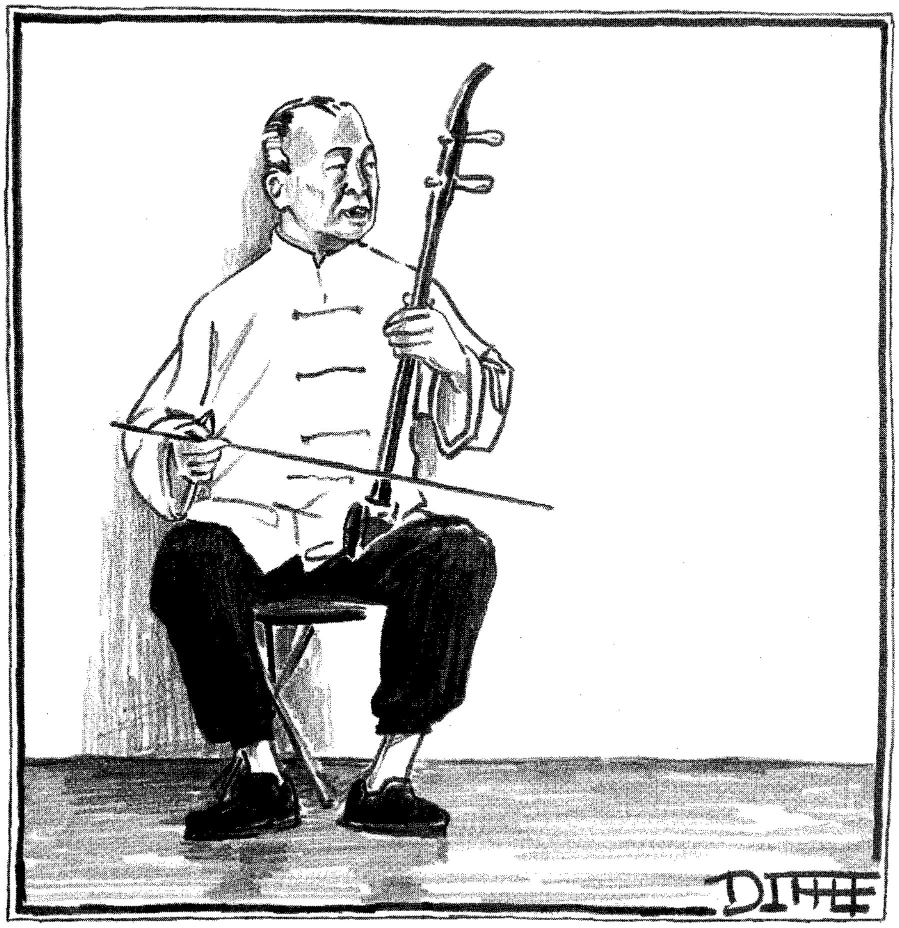


"Everybody was kung-fu fighting."

• •

afraid. Encumbered by skull and paddle, he tried to force his body into the position from which, theoretically, with a wave of the arms, a toss of the head, and a snap of the hips, he could roll upright even without the paddle. Sure enough, his head came up, but only enough for him to get a gasp of air. He had never been good at doing it this way. He tried again and just caught a glimpse of the Slavs by the first stanchion leaning out and shouting, as they watched the capsized kayak float out into the current downstream of the bridge.

One more try, he thought. He sat still, upside down in the churn of water; he leaned forward; he stretched his arms—still holding skull and paddle—toward the gloomy light of the surface to his left. Then he threw his arms wide, in the proper rotary motion. This time he didn't even get his head up. He was tired. Very rapidly, he let go of the paddle, pulled the release tab on the spray deck, and popped out. Immediately, his face was in bright sunshine in the whirlpools after the bridge. With his free hand, he flipped the boat upright again, tossed the skull into the cockpit, and looked around for his paddle. It was only a couple of yards off. One hand on the back of the boat, he launched into a determined sidestroke. All was well. But now there was a shout right beside him. The kayak tipped as a big hand grasped the cockpit. One of the Slavs, it seemed, had jumped in.

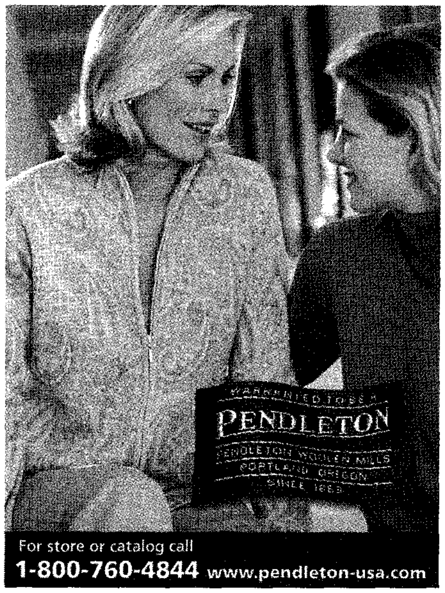
Robert knew the river here well enough. Although to the unpracticed eye it might seem one broad, uniform meander, there were, in fact, two fast channels, one on each side, and right across the middle, fifty yards down from the bridge, a great shale bank that would be exposed when the river was low. If you steered carefully as you came through the central arch, it was only a short while before you were in water little more than knee deep. It's O.K., he shouted to the wild foreign face now propped on the deck. Clearly the idiot had had no idea how cold full immersion would be. His teeth were chattering. This was snow water. He didn't have a wetsuit or life jacket. O.K., O.K. Take it easy. Wait. Just wait. O.K., now! Already Robert could touch. He waited till the water was a just a little shallower and stood up, grabbing boat and paddle as the current tried to tug them on. Stumbling on the stones, the Slav yelled and pointed. He retched, then started yelling again. Both his friends were in the water, too, but they were flailing in the main stream, swirling rapidly away along the right bank.

Getting the man beside him to steady the boat, Robert managed to climb back in—something he always found difficult in moving water—and, leaving the Slav safe in the shallows, headed for the others. He always kept a sling around his waist and a throw rope in the boat beside his seat. He caught up with one man about a hundred yards down. He was panicking. Robert clipped the sling to the kayak's stern and told him to hold it. The man thrashed about, almost pulling the boat over. He couldn't understand the simplest of instructions. He was shrieking. There were gaps in his teeth. His face was white, ugly, and terrified. With a furious effort, Robert paddled him to the side, but the bank was high here and the water was rushing deep against the smooth wall. It was another hundred yards or so before there was anything safe to climb onto.

Then he went to look for the third man. Where had he gone? Only now did it dawn on Robert what had happened. They had thought that he was in serious difficulty. Drunk, and quite probably stupid, certainly inexperienced, they hadn't hesitated to leap to his aid, diving into the stream by the second arch right where the current was strongest. It was madness. Robert paddled fast with the stream. The man he was looking for was the fat fellow with the mobile. Presumably, he had left his phone on the rocks. But Robert wasn't familiar with the river down here. All he knew was that the faint roar he could hear in the distance was the dam—none of the kayakers came this far—and that it was crucial to get out before it, otherwise the current would pull him down into the sluice and the filter.

He did paddle fast. He was determined to find the man. Only a hundred yards above the dam, he turned upstream and ferry-glided from side to side across the current in case the swimmer had fallen behind him. He had a clear image of the fat fellow with the black mustache leaning over the rocks beneath the viaduct, pointing his mobile phone, shouting, beckoning, offering him the liquor. It was just the sort of unruly vitality that had always bothered Robert. What a fool! He cruised back and forth for a good half hour, at what he judged was the last safe position, but the whole business had tired him and he needed to be sure that he could get out well above the dam. Eventually, he found a place on the left bank, climbed the high rocks, and hauled the boat up after him with his sling. The skull banged about in the bottom. He had already forgotten it. At once he went to the police.

Stella thought him heroic. After some days, the police came to the conclusion that the skull was that of a prostitute who had been missing for more than a year. They were unable to trace the two Slavs whom Robert had saved, but the corpse of the third was picked up in the filter across the sluice of the dam. His mobile had disappeared from the rocks beneath the bridge. Why on earth did they jump in? Robert kept repeating on the two occasions he was questioned. You were alone, the policeman said. They thought you were in trouble. But I didn't even know them or anything. I didn't ask to be rescued. The policeman shrugged. People imagine they can help, he said. Robert's mother seized on the drama to beg him not to go down to the viaduct again. Promise me, she said. She hugged him tight to her thin shoulders. Promise me you'll stop now. I've got nobody else in the world. She was a determined old woman. Robert solemnly promised. But Stella was angry. What will you do, then? she demanded. Her eyes burned. How will you keep fit? You're so goddam moody when you can't get out. Robert stared at her. I'll go anyway, he said. Mother will never know. So most evenings, in defiance of club rules, Robert still pulls his kayak off the rack and paddles downriver to play the wave beneath the viaduct on his own. ♦



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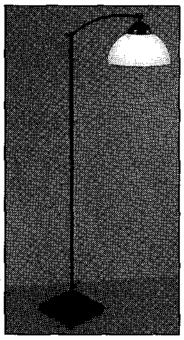

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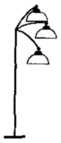

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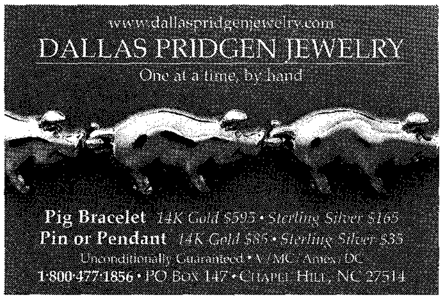
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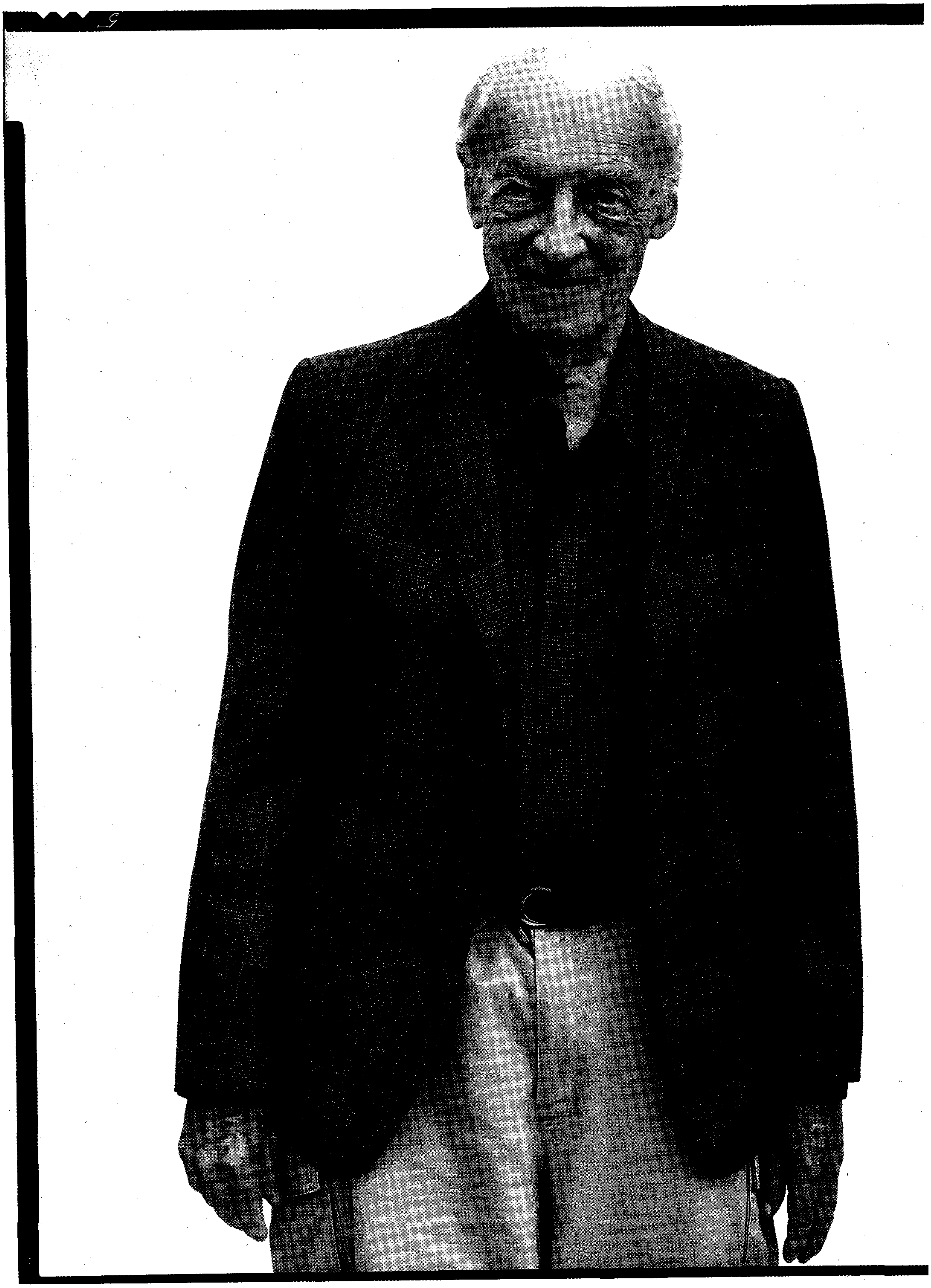

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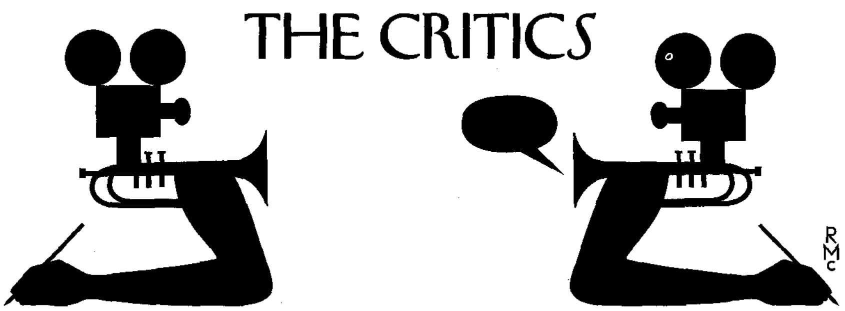

BOOKS

FINDING AUGIE MARCH

Saul Bellow's first novels.

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

We tend to think of young artists as a wild and crazy bunch, but often they are the opposite—depressed, grouchy people who sit around wondering why all those older artists are getting the grants and the contracts. Their work bespeaks their mood. They imitate their elders, and not admiringly, but grudgingly, in the spirit of "I can do it, too." In fact, they can't do it, because they don't really believe in it, but neither can they do what they're meant to do, because the moment of courage has not yet come. And so, for a while, they produce tight, hard things.

A textbook illustration has just been published: the Library of America's "Novels 1944-1953," by Saul Bellow ($35), comprising "Dangling Man," "The Victim," and "The Adventures of Augie March." The Library has now run out of dead Americans, and so, for only the second time, it has devoted a volume to the living. Bellow is an obvious choice—he is a classic—and this year is the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of "The Adventures of Augie March." Many people, I would guess, think of "Augie" as Bellow's first novel, or, if they know that it was preceded by two others, they may imagine that the career-announcing glories of "Augie"—the grand, cascading sentences, the juxtaposition of Chicago hoodlums with Plato and Spinoza and Rousseau, and, by extension, the ennoblement of crude, new America as a worthy arena for the working out of life's great questions, formerly considered addressable only in nice, old Europe—can also be glimpsed in the early books. They can't be.

"Dangling Man" (1944), Bellow's first novel, is set in Chicago, his home town, in 1942 and 1943, when Americans were finally leaving to serve in the Second World War. But Joseph, the author of the diary that constitutes the book, has not yet been inducted. So he just sits in his room, thinking. What he is thinking is that social and historical forces—war, for example—cause people to renounce their freedom, much to their satisfaction. People hate freedom, Joseph says: "We choose a master, roll over on our backs and ask for the leash." But, until the draft board calls, Joseph will hang on to his independence, and use it, he says, to find out who he is. Actually, he wants to know what humankind is—"what we are and what we are for"—but though he ponders this question night and day, he makes no progress. Staring out his window at the busy streets, he gets even more depressed. Capitalism is hell. People are hell. Nature is ugly, not to speak of Chicago. Where, in all this, was there "a particle of what, elsewhere, or in the past, had spoken in man's favor?" He never finds out, because in the end, losing patience, he goes to the draft board and demands to be inducted. His freedom now cancelled, he leaves for the war, with a sarcastic envoi: "Hurray . . . for the supervision of the spirit!"

"Dangling Man" is a respectful tribute to its models—Dostoyevsky and Rilke, plus Sartre, I believe—and at points it is handsomely written. But looked at today, through the lens of "Augie," it is amazingly constrained—stingy, even. The dialogue is often inert, the pace hypnotically even. There are no memorable characters. If I didn't know the book was by Bellow, I would never guess it.

The next novel, "The Victim" (1947), was braver. In 1945, soon after "Dangling Man" came out, the Allies liberated Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, and Buchenwald, and the facts discovered there would change what had been, till then, America's pervasive, taken-for-granted anti-Semitism. That sentiment is the subject of "The Victim." The hero, Asa Leventhal, is an editor at a small trade magazine in New York. One night, as he is walking through the park, he is buttonholed by a down-and-out man who says that his misfortunes—he has no money, he's a drunk—are Asa's fault. The story may be true, or partly. Asa once knew this man, whose name is Kirby Allbee. Some years earlier, when Asa was looking for a job, he asked Allbee for an introduction to his boss, the editor of *Dill's* magazine. At the ensuing interview, the editor treated Asa rudely, whereupon Asa, normally a restrained, cautious person, blew up and told the man off. Later, he heard that Allbee had been fired from *Dill's*, but he never gave much thought to this: Allbee had already started drinking, and was only barely hanging on at the magazine. But Allbee now reminds him of an episode that occurred before the job interview. The two of them were at a party where one of Asa's friends, Harkavy—a Jew, like Asa, and given to what Asa sees as Jewish behavior (volubility, wisecracking)—was singing old American ballads. Allbee interrupted him, saying that he shouldn't try to sing such songs: "You have to be born to them." Harkavy should sing something else instead: "Any

PHOTOGRAPH BY RICHARD AVEDON

Bellow walked out from under the shadow of the European masters and invented a new, personal style. He was part of a Zeitgeist.

Jewish song. Something you've really got feeling for." The incident ended in awkwardness all round, but Asa says that he soon forgot about it. Allbee says that Asa didn't forget about it, and that he staged the explosion with the editor precisely in order to get him fired. Asa ruined his life. Now he owes him.

Allbee, Bellow's first really interesting character, is not so much a man as a dybbuk. He has a yellow gleam in his eye; he turns up everywhere Asa goes, and he knows all about him. But he is not just diabolical. He is also piteous—bruised, begging, weeping. Then, in a flash, his tears vanish, and he is telling Asa how the dirty Jews have taken over the city. The problem is worse than that, however, for while Asa is repelled by Allbee he also identifies with him, sees him as his double. When the man is not with him, he still feels his nearness: "He could even evoke the odor of his hair and skin. The acuteness and intimacy of it . . . oppressed and intoxicated him." Soon Allbee has moved into Asa's apartment, where he wears his host's bathrobe and reads his mail. In a culminating scene, Asa comes home one night to find Allbee in his bed with a prostitute. (The daybed was too narrow, Allbee explains.) As the woman hurriedly dresses, Asa stares at her breasts. The whole business is appalling.

I think it is meant to convey the appallingness of anti-Semitism for a second-generation Jew of the time. Reading the book, one fairly hops up and down with frustration that Asa doesn't just tell Allbee to get lost. His failure to do so, Bellow seems to say, is part of the neurosis of assimilation. Asa remembers that his immigrant father faced the world squarely as a foe. He had a favorite saying: "*Ruf mir Yoshke, ruf mir Moshke, aber gib mir die groschke.*" ("Call me Ikey, call me Moe, but give me the dough.") He didn't hope for decent treatment, only for survival. But Asa, like other immigrants' children, wants a respected place in the Gentiles' world, and there his troubles begin: social discomfort, fear of seeming Jewish (hence his stolidity), resentment of slights, self-hatred for ignoring slights, worry that he is imagining slights. Then comes the guilt—for example, survivor guilt. Asa, who came of age during the Depression and has had his jobless periods, can't quite believe that he is gainfully employed. "I got away with it," he thinks. And Allbee plucks exactly this string in his mind. Why should Asa, a Jew, an outsider, have a job when Allbee, a Gentile, a real American, is out of work? Indeed, as this stew thickens, one starts to question which one is the Jew. After the episode with the prostitute, Asa finally throws Allbee out, but in the middle of the night Allbee sneaks back into the apartment and tries to kill himself in Asa's kitchen. The method he has chosen is gas. It's as if he were doing a parody of the Jews. The book's ambiguous title—which man is the victim?—underlies this reversal.

"The Victim" is a novel of ideas, and, accordingly, much of it takes place in the mind. (Now and then you wonder whether Allbee isn't something Asa has imagined.) The world is still there: apart from Allbee, there are a few vivid characters—all of them very Jewish, by Asa's lights—and when they talk we hear real, breathing human speech. The descriptions of the city, in keeping with the spell that Allbee casts over the book, have a certain sulfurous force. But Asa's personality applies a counterforce. He is an unimaginative man. Bellow presumably made him so in order to tell us what anti-Semitism is like for the average Jew, but since all the narration is from his point of view it can get pretty average, too. The book is like a boiler; the center is burning, but the walls are thick. Bellow seems to have known this as he was writing. At one point, Asa says to himself that for most people living is like running "in an egg race with the egg in a spoon . . . watching the egg, fearing for the egg." Sometimes we get sick of our caution, he thinks. But "man is weak and breakable," so he goes on watching the egg.

Bellow had reason to do so. He, too, was a second-generation Jew, and he was entering a field, the English-language novel, in which Jews were felt to have no place. (When, after graduating from Northwestern, in 1937, he was thinking of doing graduate study in English, the chairman of the department said to him what Allbee says to Harkavy: "You weren't born to it." Do something else.) Today, Philip Roth can fill a novel with Newark Jews and posit their generational history as the story of America—indeed, call the book "American Pastoral"—and we don't blink an eye. But such a situation was unforeseen in the nineteen-forties. In that context, it was courageous of Bellow, who longed to enter the big leagues, to make anti-Semitism the subject of his second novel, but the only way he could see to do it was by imitating European models: Dostoyevsky (the interiority, the Devil, the double), Flaubert (the factuality, the polished sentences). When he was older, he described both "The Victim" and "Dangling Man" as "victim literature," by which he meant that *he* was victimized, by his insecurities, as a Jewish nobody from Chicago: "I was restrained, controlled, demonstrating that I could write 'good.' "

But he didn't know that in 1947. All he knew was that he was vaguely dissatisfied with "The Victim," and crushed by its poor sales. Then his luck changed. Viking, a prestigious firm, came after him, and offered him a flattering three-thousand-dollar advance on his next novel. He also won a Guggenheim fellowship, after having been turned down twice. He and his wife decided to spend the fellowship year in Europe. In 1948, they moved to France, where Bellow applied himself to a new book, called "The Crab and the Butterfly." Only one chapter of that novel survives. According to James Atlas's biography of Bellow, it is a bleak narrative about two men talking to each other from adjacent beds in a Chicago hospital. Bellow was soon having trouble with it. Furthermore, he hated Paris. The weather was gray; the French were snotty. "I was terribly depressed," he later said.

Then, as he recalled, he experienced an epiphany: "I had a room in Paris where I was working, and one day as I was going there after breakfast, a bright spring morning, I saw water trickling down the street and sparkling." The shining stream, he said, suggested to him the form of a new novel. Perhaps so, but a few other circumstances should be taken into account. This was the time, the postwar years, when American art came into its home country. Not just Bellow but many others walked out from under the shadow of the European masters and invented new, personal styles. Bellow was part of a Zeitgeist, and the stay in Europe encouraged his enlistment. The more he hated France, the more he loved America, and wanted to make an art that was like America—big and fresh and loud.

Furthermore, he had received a great deal of encouragement. When he was starting out, Bellow was friendly with New York's intellectual community, both the *Partisan Review* crowd and a more louche gang in Greenwich Village. These people, many of whom were Jewish, and pained at the exclusion of Jews from America's mainstream intellectual life, were very impressed by Bellow—by his brio, his erudition, his ambition, his seeming confidence. "He examined Hemingway's style like a surgeon pondering another surgeon's stitches," Alfred Kazin remembered. The New York crowd stumped for him. When I read what Elizabeth Hardwick wrote about "The Victim" in *Partisan Review*—"It would be hard to think of any young writer who has a better chance than Bellow to become the redeeming novelist of the period"—it seems to me that she is hoping as much as describing. Manhattan's young literati desperately wanted a redeeming novelist to rise from their ranks, and they all but begged Bellow to take the job.

Finally, simply, the time had come. For years, Bellow had been old; now, in his thirties, he could be young. He laid "The Crab and the Butterfly" aside and started a new novel, "The Adventures of Augie March." He wrote the first half very quickly, revising little. "The book just came to me," he said. "All I had to do was be there with buckets to catch it."

No halo, but only the miasma from Chicago's smokestacks, hangs over the little house in Humboldt Park—a Jewish working-class neighborhood—where Augie March grows up (as did Bellow). Still, we are looking at a holy city. This is the first and probably the most admired beauty of Bellow's book, that it takes the dirty old world and, combining a child's capacity for awe with an adult's sense of loss, makes of it a paradise: that is, not just a place of happiness but one in which the most serious principles of life are already present, as symbol—the apple, the snake.

The trick had certainly been done before—Proust's Combray, Cather's Black Hawk. It had even been done with a big city, Joyce's Dublin. But Chicago was different. With its automobile-assembly plants and slaughterhouses, it was widely considered the most hard-bitten town on earth, the very picture of industrial capitalism's ability to crush the human soul, and that was the tribute paid to it by its earlier chroniclers: Frank Norris, Upton Sinclair, James T. Farrell, Nelson Algren. Then came Augie March's Chicago, hopping and pulsing with human souls of every possible variety, all of them gesticulating and shouting, demanding dinner and love and money, expounding their philosophy of life, urging its universal adoption, and generally acting as though industrial capitalism had been invented for their own personal use.

Augie's family consists of Mrs. March and her three sons. Augie is the middle child, an aimless, happy boy, who is maybe eight or ten years old when we meet him. There used to be a father, who drove a laundry truck, but he disappeared. In his place, the family has Grandma Lausch. Actually, she is not their grandmother; she is a boarder. Nevertheless, she runs the household. She comes from Odessa, where, she explains, she was married to a fine gentleman and her sons had German nannies. She still has her silk gown, her fur piece, her ostrich feathers. Now she sits in a shabby kitchen in Chicago, explaining to the feckless Marches how to chisel the city's welfare system. Thus does history enter the novel: Europe, immigration, the pain of immigration. (Bellow's mother also came from Russia with ostrich feathers in her trunk.) But Grandma Lausch is undiscourageable. She is a tsar, a Machiavel, full of force and pride and guile. When she's finished bossing Mrs. March and the boys around, she summons Mr. Kreindl, a neighbor, for klabyasch, an old-country card game, which she plays with "sharp gold in her eyes." She is the first great personage in a book that carries on for six hundred pages without producing a single dull character. Even the animals have interesting personalities.

As Augie grows, he takes various jobs. He delivers floral wreaths for murdered gangsters; at Christmas, he is one of Santa's elves in Deever's depart-

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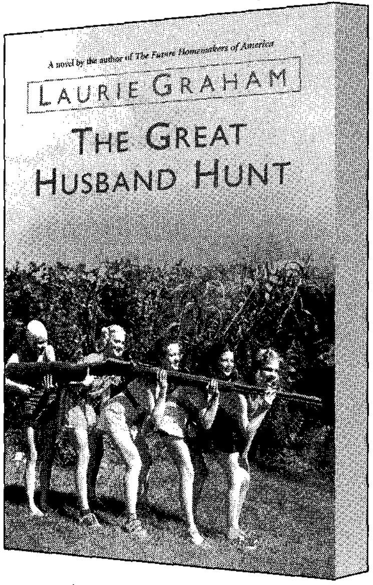

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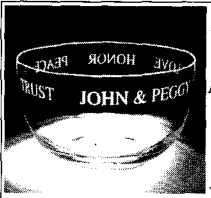

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"Do you have anything newer and more useless?"

ment store. Through his eyes, we discover Chicago in the twenties, and it is a dazzlement: swanky apartments, lousy apartments, pool rooms, dime stores, boxing gyms, music halls with girls playing the "Liebestod" on bagpipes. When Augie and his friends have nothing else to do, they go to City Hall and ride the elevator: "In the cage we rose and dropped, rubbing elbows with bigshots and operators, commissioners, grabbers, heelers, tipsters, hoodlums, wolves, fixers, plaintiffs, flatfeet, men in Western hats and women in lizard shoes and fur coats, hothouse and arctic drafts mixed up, brute things and airs of sex, evidence of heavy feeding and systematic shaving, of calculations, grief, not-caring, and hopes of tremendous millions in concrete to be poured or whole Mississippis of bootleg whiskey and beer." Such sentences occur on almost every page. They are like hall closets; you open them and everything falls out. All of Chicago seems gathered into the book, and eventually all of America, and much of human history as well. People are compared to Peter the Great, Pasiphaë, Alcibiades, Cincinnatus, Sardanapalus, Cesar Romero. Chicago becomes the world. The fact that its citizens play klabyasch and express themselves in four or five different languages (James Wood's notes to the Library of America edition could have given us more help with the Yiddish) does not mean that they are marginal. It means they are central—the inheritors.

Chief among the beneficiaries are the Jews. Bellow works an interesting game here. Most of the main characters are Jews, and many scenes, particularly those of family intimacy and of dealmaking, seem intended as specifically Jewish. (A few minutes before Augie's brother's wedding, we see the bride, in her gown and veil, on the phone with the photographer, trying to beat him down on his price: "Listen, Schultz, if you try to hold me up you'll get no business out of any of the Magnuses ever again.") And Augie speaks Jewish. Those long, baroque, history-swallowing sentences have their roots in Yiddish discourse, as do the following sentences, about a woman sitting on the beach: "If you want to know what she thought, it was that back home was locked. There were two pounds of hotdogs on the shelf of the gas range, two pounds of cold potatoes for salad, mustard, a rye bread already sliced. If she ran out, she could send me for more."

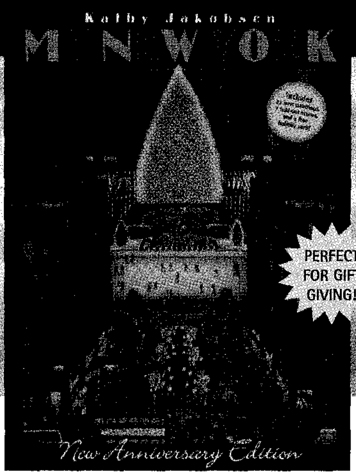
But this is all done so easily, and so constantly, that you forget it's Jewish. Bellow objected very much to being called a Jewish novelist. He wanted to be regarded as an American novelist who happened to be Jewish, and he bestowed that same decontextualization on his characters. Anti-Semitism, central to "The Victim," is mentioned only in passing in "Augie," nor is there any effort to make the Jews seem more high-minded, or more likely to suffer, than anyone else. On the contrary, most of the Jews in the novel are enthusiastic lowlifes, people who run bootleg (as Bellow's father did) and have names like Dingbat, people who are just doing deals and trying to get by. Their very ignobility is a bid for respectability: Bellow doesn't feel that he has to protect them. And by that route he made the lives of Jews a normal subject for American literature.

The novel doesn't really have a plot. Instead, it has a pattern, which is that Augie gets lectured by his family and friends on how he should wise up. He has a suggestible, delightable mind, and therefore he tends to drift. The people around him are steadier. They make plans, invent philosophies, and they try to enlist him. One after another succeeds. They hire him, hector him, buy him new clothes. But always, after a while, he says no thanks and moves on. In the early chapters, this is usually because something else has caught his eye. But, as Augie gets older, his resistance is increasingly a moral matter. He sees that human beings are all involved in a terrible struggle for power. The best description of this is provided by a man, Basteshaw, who turns up—during a shipwreck!—late in the book: "Go back to when I was a kid in the municipal swimming pool. A thousand naked little bastards screaming, punching, pushing, kicking. The lifeguards whistle and holler and punish you, the cops on duty . . . call you snot-nose. Shivery little rat. Lips blue, blood thin, scared, your little balls tight. . . . The shoving multitude bears down, and you're nothing." To become something, and overcome your fear, Augie says, you fashion a self that can frighten the world back: "You invent a man who can stand before the terrible appearances. This way he can't get justice and he can't give justice, but he can live." Augie wants no part of it. As he watches his brother Simon, an American success story, screaming at people over the phone, meanwhile knocking things off the desk with his alligator shoes, something inside him is already out the door. He's repelled by the unkindness, but, more than that, he can't bear the renunciation of hope. He is looking "for the right thing to do, for a fate good enough."

It is a tribute to his creator's skill that Augie manages to be so virtuous, so idealistic, without getting on our nerves. Part of Bellow's strategy is to allow Augie's antagonists—his "reality" instructors—to express our doubts, with considerable mordant verve. "I know what you want," one of his friends says to him. "O paidea! O King David! O Plutarch and Seneca! . . . O godlike man! Tell me, pal, am I getting warm or not?" But these people don't change Augie's course. In the last chapter, he is still drifting. The Second World War has just ended. Augie is living in France, because that's where his new wife, who thinks she's an actress, has been offered a film job. He's doing deals, selling Army surplus, at the bidding of yet another of the book's hundred and one gonifs. As before, none of this may last. The novel runs out of steam in its last quarter or so, but that is often the case with a bildungsroman (see "Huckleberry Finn," "My Ántonia"), because it is the quest that is romantic, and no ending of that, no fall into adult life, will seem a worthy conclusion.

It would be hard to imagine a book more embedded in its historical circumstances than "Augie." In its vitality and cheer, it was a response to the grim view of modern life taken by the American naturalists, and also by the European modernists—the "Wastelanders," as Bellow called them. Needless to say, the book meant a great deal to the Jewish literary crowd, but you didn't have to be Jewish to care about Bellow. In the fifties, many American intellectuals, now disabused regarding the Soviet Union, began to look more kindly on their own country—"It is no longer the case," Lionel Trilling wrote in 1952, "that an avowed aloofness from national feeling is the young intellectual's first ceremonial step into the life of thought"—and it seemed to them possible that they might be given some voice in public matters. "Augie" 's high-low character—its insertion of European culture into American street life—symbolized their aspiration, and the book's commercial success encouraged it. As the fifties passed into the early sixties—with the civil-rights movement and the election of John Kennedy—that hope became almost a national movement. Augie March was one of its heralds, and when I read certain of his meditations I think of those times. At one point, Augie says that we should learn to take truth in mixed form: "If the highest should come in that empty overheated tavern with its flies and the hot radio buzzing between the plays and plugged beer from Sox Park, what are you supposed to do but take the mixture and say imperfection is always the condition as found; all great beauty too, my scratched eyeballs will always see scratched. And there may gods turn up anywhere." This passage would have done very nicely as a reading at a Unitarian church service of the period, or as an epigraph to "The Family of Man."

Today, "Augie" is no longer riding a wave of progressive politics. One must love the book on artistic grounds—for its comedy, its generosity, its density, its linguistic miracles—and also, still, for its hopefulness. Distant as we are from the uplift-minded fifties, we nevertheless get out of bed in the morning and put on our socks and our shoes and our hope. Bellow associated optimism with the United States, and it is very specifically as an American that Augie, in the last paragraph of the book, is speeding his car across Normandy so that he can arrive before nightfall in Bruges (where he has to "look up a guy . . . who had a big nylon deal on his mind"), and see the pretty canals. Beneath his wheels are the barely cold bones of the war dead. He knows this, but he can't stop hoping—a habit that makes him think of Columbus. It also makes him think that, compared with Columbus, he's something of a failure. But, he adds, "Columbus too thought he was a flop, probably, when they sent him back in chains. Which didn't prove there was no America." In those sentences, the last in the book, America is the focus of hope, as well as its symbol. Columbus's America, and Bellow's, may now seem merely a symbol. Which doesn't mean there's no hope. ♦



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BRIEFLY NOTED

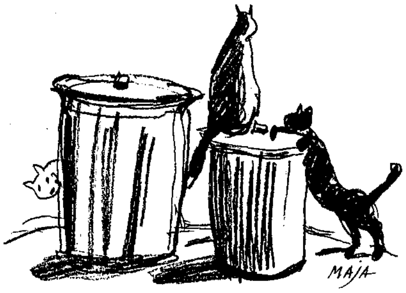
American Writers

Alfred Kazin's America, *edited by Ted Solotaroff (HarperCollins; $29.95).* The literary critic Alfred Kazin chose America as his subject, and his intellectual awakening is itself something of an American legend. As a young man during the Depression, in the "delicious isolation" of the New York Public Library, he immersed himself in Howells, Faulkner, and others, eventually producing "On Native Grounds," a landmark study of American realism and modernism in which he displayed the infallible nose for a writer's best work that distinguished his long career. Later, he turned his critical eye inward, producing three memoirs about his Jewish boyhood in Brownsville and his friendships with famous contemporaries. Kazin died in 1998, and Ted Solotaroff's selection of his work is a fitting tribute: a book that will be a starting point for further reading, both of Kazin and of the native writers to whom he devoted himself.

Hawthorne, *by Brenda Wineapple (Knopf; $30).* Nathaniel Hawthorne's ambition was such that he always considered himself a failure. A prude and a mama's boy, haunted by the fear that writing was not a manly profession, he was ashamed of his fame. Far from being the anti-Puritan that his work suggests, he was an irascible conservative, who believed that women shouldn't be writers, and who, during the Civil War, horrified his more enlightened peers by displaying equal contempt for North and South. After his death, critics grappled with "the paradox of Hawthorne," resorting to hydraulic metaphors for his genius: it was overwhelming; it was forced into channels. Wineapple's take is notable for its plain acceptance of Hawthorne's contradictions: a student of hypocrisy, he was a resolute Yankee who hated his patrimony.

Arthur Miller, *by Martin Gottfried (Da Capo; $30).* At the mid-century moment when psychological realism, moral seriousness, and progressive politics formed our dominant literary aesthetic, the Broadway success of "All My Sons" catapulted Miller to fame, not just as a playwright but as an exemplar: the intellectual as superstar, mighty enough to engage the country's conscience, sexy enough to make Marilyn Monroe his bride. Gottfried traces Miller's development from his family's devastation in the 1929 stock-market crash through his leftist indoctrination at the University of Michigan and his literary ascendancy and shows a man emotionally remote and professionally sanctimonious, who complained, for instance, that audiences were supposed to "think, not weep" at "Death of a Salesman." While Miller's own interest in psychology doubtless encourages such biographical scrutiny, the dutiful Ping-Ponging between life and writings unfortunately amplifies the sense of the playwright's self-involvement and mutes the sense of his achievement.

Gellhorn, *by Caroline Moorehead (Henry Holt; $27.50).* From her early days as a correspondent in the Spanish Civil War to her coverage, at the age of eighty-five, of murdered Brazilian street children, Martha Gellhorn was a defender of the underdog. Scornful of "all that objectivity shit" and intemperate in her judgments—friends were exiled, lovers dismissed—Gellhorn was driven to her itinerant existence by a terror of boredom. She was tall, blond, and legendarily tough; her marriage to Hemingway was celebrated with a dinner of roast moose. At the age of thirty-one, she travelled to Finland to await the Russian invasion; at forty-one, she adopted a child who had been abandoned in postwar Italy; in her fifties, she reported on the Vietnam War. Throughout, she remained a solitary being. "I only loved the world of men," she wrote to a friend, "not the world of men-and-women."



A Tragic Honesty: The Life and Work of Richard Yates, *by Blake Bailey (Picador; $35).* In addition to writing the 1961 classic "Revolutionary Road," three or four more very good novels, and some wonderful short stories, Richard Yates led a life faithful to a certain cliché of the twentieth-century American male writer: wrecked marriages, raging alcoholism, mental breakdowns, biting poverty, and an uncompromising vision of art. Along the way, he made brief stops in Washington, as R.F.K.'s speechwriter (the one man there just for the money, he thought), and Hollywood (screenwriting for the money, like everyone else, but failing to make much). That was about enough compromising for Yates, who for years didn't let emphysema, or its attendant oxygen tanks, stop him from smoking four packs of cigarettes a day. Bailey has difficulty imagining Yates as anything other than a Yates character, but his portrait has little of the texture that made those characters come alive.

The Fifth Book of Peace, *by Maxine Hong Kingston (Knopf; $26).* When, fourteen years ago, Kingston embarked on a sequel to her delightful novel "Tripmaster Monkey," she called it "The Fourth Book of Peace," echoing a half-remembered Chinese legend about Three Books of Peace. But the manuscript was destroyed in a fire—a suggestive occurrence to Kingston, because the books in the legend were also burned. Here she re-creates her lost fictional narrative and sets it alongside an account of her life after the fire, so that the Vietnam-era doings of her antic hero, Wittman Ah Sing, who moves to Hawaii to evade the draft, are juxtaposed with her own experience teaching writing workshops for veterans of Vietnam and other wars. The book is rich in empathy and moral conviction, but Kingston is such an exuberant storyteller that fans may regret that the fictional part remains unfinished.

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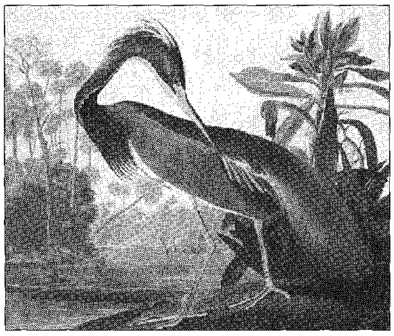

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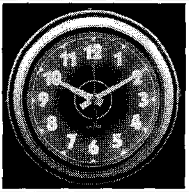

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BOOKS

THE END MATTER

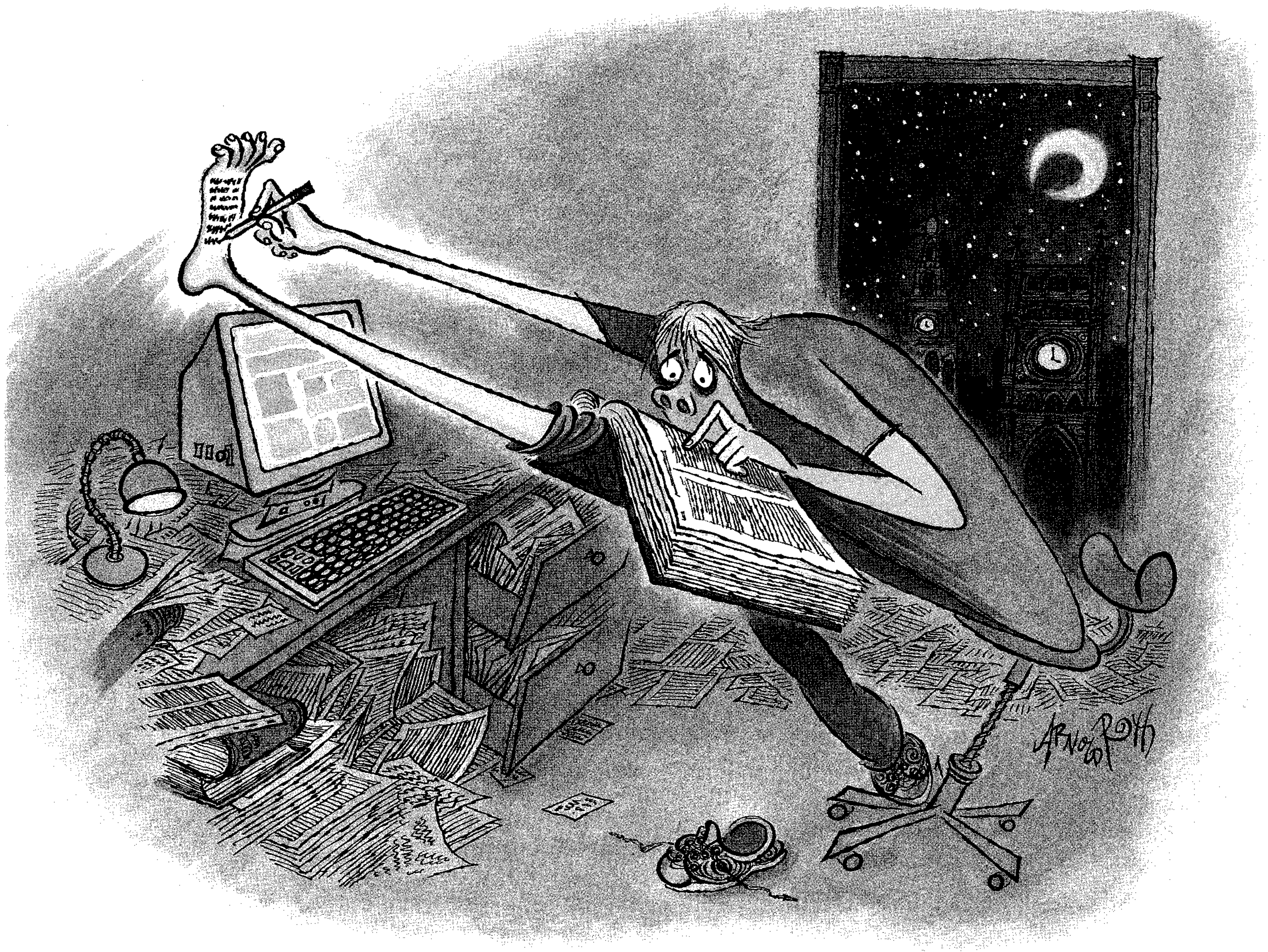
The nightmare of citation.

BY LOUIS MENAND

It is 2:30 A.M. of a Monday, spring semester, 1983. Things are looking extremely good. Forty-eight hours of high-intensity stack work and some inspired typing have produced the thirty-page final paper for Modern European History (Mr. Blague, MW 9-10) that you were supposed to be working on all semester but that an unfortunate dispute involving a car, which, as you have repeatedly pointed out, really wasn't in such good shape when you borrowed it, has prevented you from giving the time and attention you sincerely intended. Now, as you contemplate the pile of neatly typed 20-lb. Eaton non-corrasable bond on your desk, you are satisfied that you have turned out, in two days, the intellectual and moral equivalent of three months' steady application, a paper that Professor Blague will recognize as the work of a powerful and unexpectedly mature historical mind. Only the notes and the bibliography remain. You have scored an emergency supply of No-Doz, the collegian's friend. Your Smith-Corona portable electric typewriter, the high-school graduation gift of proud grandparents and a machine expressly designed to meet the exigencies of the all-nighter, shows every sign of being equal to its historic task. Two-thirty is by no means an unreasonable hour of the night. You anticipate a decent five or six hours of sleep before class time. And you are, of course, so wrong. You are not nearing the finish line at all. There is a signpost up ahead: you are about to enter The End Matter.

Annotation may seem a mindless and mechanical task. In fact, it calls both for superb fine-motor skills and for adherence to the most exiguous formal demands. Throw in sleep deprivation and a mild case of caffeine jitters, and the combination is guaranteed to produce flawed page after flawed page. In the world of End Matter, there is no such thing as a flyspeck. Every error is an error of substance, a betrayal of ignorance and inexperience, the academic equivalent of the double dribble. That the decorums of citation are the arbitrary residue of ancient pedantries whose raisons d'être are long past reconstructing does not reduce the penalties for nonconformity. You are on page 3 of your endnotes before you remember that *ibid* is supposed to end with a period, since it is an abbreviation for *ibidem* ("in the same place"). What genius decided that it was worth saving a character by this practice no longer matters. What matters is that it is now three-thirty in the morning and you have to retype three pages of notes. Or perhaps it suddenly strikes you, with the force of panic, that maybe, as a foreign term, *ibid.* should be underlined. You quickly discover that, by continually hand-adjusting the typewriter's platen (the "roller," in layman's language), in order to superscript your endnote numbers, you have thrown the alignment out of whack, and when you roll the page back up to underline the *ibid.s* you type the line right through the word. You have to pull the paper out and start over.

You also need to remember that, even in the United States, the city in which Harvard University Press is situated is cited as Cambridge, Mass., while the city where Cambridge University Press is found is simply Cambridge. (Not that the British care; they happen to be complete slobs about citation.) And which is it: the Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, the Belknap Press, or Harvard University Press? What is the Belknap Press, exactly? The whole subfield of publishers' names is a thornbush of institutional idiosyncrasy. There is no such thing as the University of Mississippi Press. It is the University Press of Mississippi (just as Indiana University must never be called the University of Indiana, even though that, in fact, is what it is). Once, there was Charles Scribner's Sons; now it is Scribner. Make sure you have the right one. Knopf is both cooler and



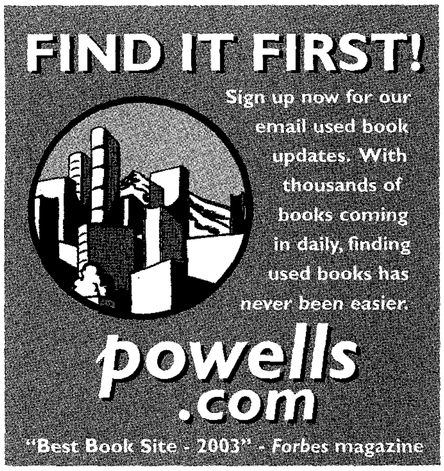
more kosher than Alfred A. Knopf, but W. W. Norton is a publishing house and Norton is a character in "The Honeymooners." The student who types Macmillan & Co., Inc., instead of Macmillan & Co., is inviting a big red circle from the Blague marking pen, even though Macmillan & Co., Inc., is what it says on the title page. Little, Brown insists on its baffling comma (what's wrong with Little and Brown?); the comma-free Harcourt Brace Jovanovich is not a law firm but possibly hopes to be mistaken for one. Then there is the special hell of reprints—the Penguins and Plumes and HarperTorch books, the Bantams, the Dovers, and the Signets. It seems undignified to cite the publisher of a book that cost two dollars and ninety-five cents and was originally printed somewhere else. And if the pagination is different is it a new ed., or still a repr.? Is an "expanded edition" a rev. ed. or a 2nd ed.? You suspect that there are rules covering these things, but it is now 4 A.M. and you have no idea how to find out.

As you reach the far shores of the bibliography, and Phoebus rims the quad with reddening fire, questions such as where to put the name of the editor (after the title or before?); how to list an article in a collection (under the author of the article or under the editor of the collection, or both?); when you are supposed to include the issue number, as well as the volume number, of a journal; and when to precede page numbers by a colon and when by pp. assume an unbearable, almost an existential weight. The mistakes metastasize. As you are typing note 65, you realize, many pages too late, that you have two note 11s. You discover that you have been op-citing a work that you never cited. You curse yourself for not buying the corrasable bond. Flakes of whiteout litter the surface of the now unpleasantly hot Smith-Corona. You have started to make corrections with a pencil. You look at the page you just pulled out of the typewriter. It looks like a ransom note.

The worst part of the miserable ordeal is that, no matter how diligently you adhere to the conventions of one style of citation, Professor Blague will prefer a different one. If you use the "MLA Style Manual," he will use Turabian; if it is Turabian you have relied on, he will turn out to be a lifelong Chicagoan. (Whatever you do, incidentally, do not look for guidance in the pages of *The New Yorker*, where house style requires quotation marks for book titles and the insertion of commas in places where other periodicals don't even have places.)

Correct citation, like virtually every other aspect of academic writing, is a moving target. There is no uniform system. The natural sciences, and fields, like sociology, that pose as such, cite by last

The fifteenth edition of "The Chicago Manual of Style," at nine hundred and fifty-six pages, shows troubling signs of flexibility.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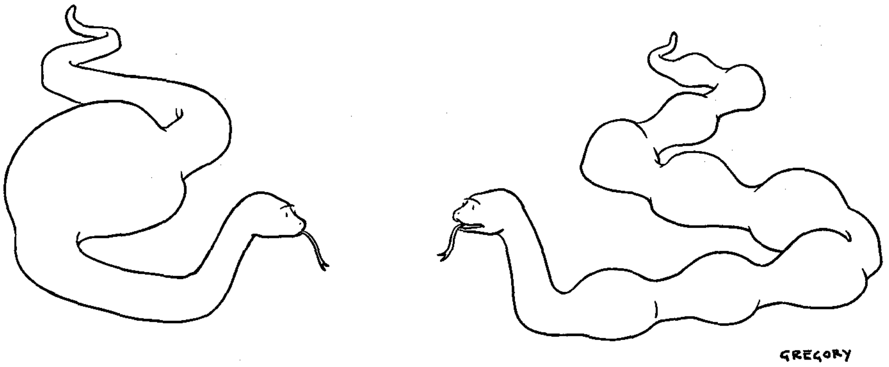
name and date of publication (Merton 1957a) and regard first names as a literary indulgence (R. K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* [hereafter *STSS* in text]). Law journals weirdly print article titles in itals (*Notes on Promissory Estoppel in Collective Bargaining Disputes*) and book titles all caps (SECOND RESTATEMENT OF CONTRACTS). They also precede page numbers, after the initial reference, with "at" (*Bush v. Gore*, at 7), an affectation that you would be shot for if you adopted it in an English paper. Recently, though, the humanities have been drifting in this hardhat, Men at Work direction by reducing titles to tech-speak ("*Cider House* subverts the conventions of monologism Irving elaborates in the texts after *Garp*") and by inserting page references in the text ("what Judith Butler has referred to as 'sex' [*GT* 87]"). Students using an older sister's edition of the "MLA Style Manual," published before these new forms became standard, had better hope that their literature professors are too old to know the difference.

The notion that the personal computer has eliminated the bone-crushing inefficiency of the typewriter, and turned composing The End Matter into a drive in the word-processing park, belongs to the myth that all work on a computer is "fun"—one of the Digital Age's cruellest jokes. It's true that typing a term paper no longer feels like working in a zinc quarry. You don't rely on No-Doz these days (*please*); you use, thanks to a roommate's very obliging psychopharmacologist, Provigil, a med being considered for military pilots who want to stay alert for twenty-four hours at a stretch. Though your laptop may not have all the gigabytes that you deserve but that your chintzy grandparents, who lease a brand-new Lexus *every year*, declined to spring for, it does have a hard drive capable of storing the equivalent of eighty billion three-by-five file cards, probably enough to get you through college (after which you will need to upgrade). And, yes, your term paper for Sexing the Victorians: Gender and Transgression in European Modernity (Ms. Slick, M 2-5) is now sixty-five elegantly formatted laser-printed pages, including a four-color cover page and scanned-in illustrations of nineteenth-century dildos and the like. But The End Matter remains an interminable twilight struggle. The potential for rage and heartbreak is even greater, in fact, for the very technology that is supposed to speed the task of information-processing is now your most insidious foe.

First of all, it is time to speak some truth to power in this country: *Microsoft Word is a terrible program.* Its terribleness is of a piece with the terribleness of Windows generally, a system so overloaded with icons, menus, buttons, and incomprehensible Help windows that performing almost any function means entering a treacherous wilderness of pop-ups posing alternatives of terrifying starkness: Accept/Decline/Cancel; Logoff/Shut Down/Restart; and the mysterious Do Not Show This Warning Again. You often feel that you're not ready to make a decision so unalterable; but when you try to make the window go away your machine emits an angry beep. You double-click. You triple-click. *Beep beep beep beep beep.* You are being held for a fool by a chip.

When, in the old days, you hit the wrong key on your typewriter, you got one wrong character. Strike the wrong keys in Word and you are suddenly writing in Norwegian Bokmal (*Bokmal*?). And you have no idea how you got there;



"I went with the tasting menu."

you can spend the rest of the night trying to get out. In the end, you stop the random clicking and dragging and pulling-down and have recourse to the solution of every computer moron: with a sob of relief, you press Ctrl/Alt/Del. (What do Control and Alt *mean*, by the way? Does anyone still know?) A message appears: "You will lose any unsaved information in all programs that are running." O.K.? Cancel? End task? End life? The whole reason for rebooting was that you didn't *have* access to your information, so how can you save it? You can always pull the plug out of the wall. That usually ends your "session" (a term borrowed—no accident—from psychoanalysis).

Few features of Word can be responsible for more user meltdowns than Footnote and Endnote (which is saying a lot in the case of a program whose Thesaurus treats "information" as "in formation," offering "in order" and "in sequence" as possible synonyms, and whose spellcheck suggests that when you typed the unrecognized "decorums" you might have meant "deco rums"). To begin with, the designers of Word apparently believe that the conventional method of endnote numbering is with lowercase Roman numerals—i, ii, iii, etc. When was the last time you read anything that adhered to this style? It would lead to sentences like:

> In the Gramscian paradigm, the "intellectual"[lxxxvii] is, by definition, always already a liminal status.[lxxxviii]

(Hmm. Not bad.) To make this into something recognizably human, you need to click your way into the relevant menu (View? Insert? Format?) and change the i, ii, iii, etc., to 1, 2, 3, etc. Even if you *wanted* to use lowercase Roman numerals somewhere, whenever you typed "i" Word would helpfully turn it into "I" as soon as you pressed the space bar. Similarly, if, God forbid, you ever begin a note or a bibliography entry with the letter "A.," when you hit Enter, Word automatically types "B." on the next line. Never, btw (which, unlike "poststructuralism," is a word in Word spellcheck), ask that androgynous paper clip anything. S/he is just a stooge for management, leading you down more rabbit holes of options for things called Wizards, Macros, Templates, and Cascading Style Sheets. Finally, there is the moment when you realize that your notes are starting to appear in `12-pt. Courier New`. Word, it seems, has, at some arbitrary point in the proceedings, decided that although you have been typing happily away in Times New Roman, you really want to be in the default font of the original document. You are confident that you can lick this thing: you painstakingly position your cursor in the Endnotes window (not the text!, where irreparable damage may occur) and click Edit, then the powerful Select All; you drag the arrow to Normal (praying that your finger doesn't lose contact with the mouse, in which case the window will disappear, and trying not to wonder what the difference between Normal and Clear Formatting might be) and then, in the little window to the right, to Times New Roman. You triumphantly click, and find that you are indeed back in Times New Roman but that all your italics have been removed. What about any of this can be considered "high-speed"?

The special difficulty that digitization presents to scholarship has to do with the Internet—specifically, how to cite sources from the Web. The editors of one of the long-standing authorities in the style game, "The Chicago Manual of Style," have arrived with some advice. This new "Chicago Manual" is the fifteenth edition of a work that made its publishing début in 1906. (Before that, it served an incarnation as the in-house style sheet at the University of Chicago Press.) It is important to note at the outset that the new edition has nine hundred and fifty-six pages and retails for fifty-five dollars. The only reasons to buy it are (1) that you want to start up a press and (2) that you want it to be exactly like the University of Chicago Press. "The Chicago Manual of Style" is, fundamentally, the in-house authority for bookmaking at the Press. It explains things like half titles; CIP (Cataloguing-in-Publication) data; bound-in errata pages; and the distinctions between perfect, notch, and burst bindings—matters of no relevance to the average term-paper writer. The text is organized in the manner of the "Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus," with numbered points (**1.1, 1.2 . . . 1.11, 1.12**, and so on). Data are dispensed accordingly, in the ground-upward manner of logical

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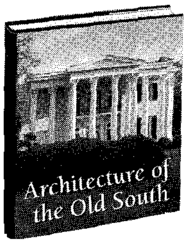

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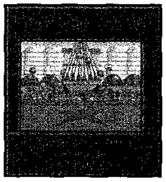

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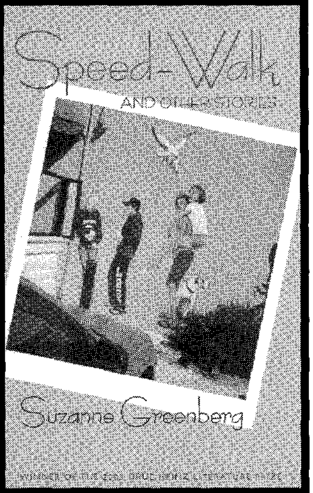

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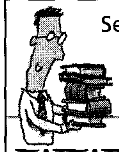

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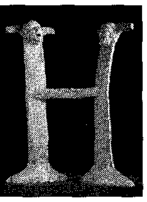

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positivism, and at ground level the points can be very elementary—e.g., “**1.112** *Content of the jacket.* Hardcover books are often protected by a coated paper jacket (or dust jacket).” Useful information for the man from Mars.

Every style book has its idiosyncrasies (part of the moving-target syndrome). Chicago used to insist on rendering dates in the form 15 August 2003, and ordinals as 2d and 3d, in the legal style, rather than 2nd and 3rd (which Word is programmed to superscript for you without asking). The “Manual” has now abandoned the former style and made the latter optional. Its authors also join the rest of the civilized world in consigning the dreadful op. cit. (along with its cousin, that desiccated old roué loc. cit.) to the lexical dustbin. One major addition (besides what the preface tantalizingly describes as “more attention to Canadian terms and usage”) is a ninety-page section on Grammar and Usage. For some reason—possibly for the convenience of our Martian friend—the authors felt it necessary to cover the field from scratch. Thus: “**5.1** *Definition.* Grammar consists of the rules governing how words are put together.” On the other hand, common sources of solecism receive less attention than they might. The College Board would still not have avoided the mistake it made on a recent P.S.A.T. exam, where it replaced the phrase “Toni Morrison’s genius” with “her,” if it had consulted the Chicago discussion of pronouns and antecedents.

The chapter on Punctuation (separate from Grammar and Usage) notes that Chicago has finally dispensed with the practice of italicizing punctuation following a title (e.g., “*The Chicago Manual of Style,* a leading authority”), which is a welcome change, since Word’s click-and-drag highlighting feature has problems performing this function. (If you wiggle the mouse a millimetre too far, trying to get that comma in, you highlight the entire line.) The authors are straightforward on two matters that many students are apparently hardwired at birth to find boggling: whether periods and commas belong inside or outside quotation marks, and whether inverted commas (sometimes called “single quotation marks”) are an appropriate way to indicate an “ironic” usage. (Inside and no.) Some of the advice is frankly a matter of taste. “An exclamation point added in brackets to

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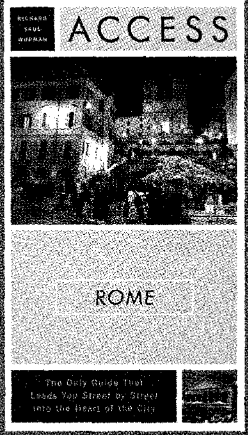

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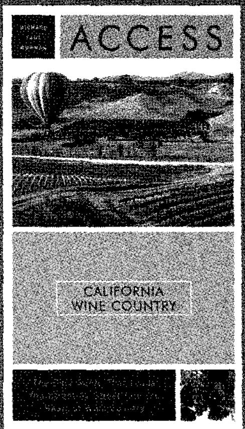

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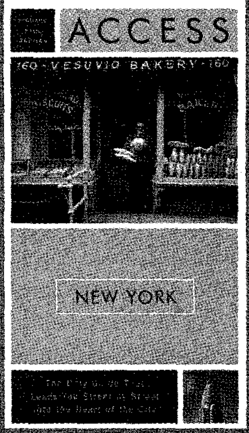

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quoted material to indicate editorial protest or amusement is strongly discouraged, since it appears contemptuous," the authors counsel. "The Latin expression *sic* (thus) is preferred." First of all, the reason the bracketed exclamation point appears contemptuous is that you use it when you wish to express contempt. There is nothing wrong with contempt. Second (which Chicago insists on, although generations of pedants have believed "secondly" to be the proper usage), *sic* is a far more damning interpolation, combining ordinary, garden-variety contempt with pedantic condescension. Elsewhere in Punctuation, the instructions are sometimes the reverse of enlightened. What could the authors possibly have been thinking when they committed the following sentence to print: "The semicolon, stronger than a comma but weaker than a period, can assume either role [!]"?

On the aggravating business of citing a Web page, Chicago recommends giving the entire URL, usually in addition to any print data (journal volume number, year, page range, and so on), plus a "descriptive locator" (where to find the quotation on the screen, since electronic editions sometimes do not paginate), plus the date accessed. This can make for a very long note. Here is one of the samples the "Manual" offers, as it would appear if you reproduced it in Word:

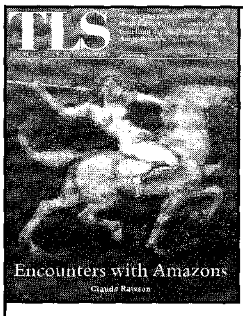
> Hlatky, M. A., D. Boothroyd, E. Vittinghoff, P. Sharp, and M. A. Whooley. 2002. Quality-of-life and depressive symptoms in postmenopausal women after receiving hormone therapy: Results from the Heart and Estrogen/Progestin Replacement Study (HERS) trial. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 287, no. 5 (February 6), http://jama.ama-assn.org/issues/v287n5/rfull/joc10108.html#aainfo (accessed January 7, 2002).

Try to prevent Word from doing that blue thing to whatever it recognizes as a hyperlink. There is undoubtedly a way to reset this, but it is deep within the bowels of the machine, guarded by dozens of angry pop-ups. Microsoft *wants* you to go on the Internet.

Attention to the new demands of electronic media informs almost every chapter of the new "Manual." There are discussions about (besides citation) preparing electronic publications, editing and proofreading onscreen, and electronic-publishing rights and permissions. The authors are sensible about these matters; they're aware that this is an area very much "under construction." In all departments, in fact, the authors allow themselves plenty of wiggle room, quoting a passage from the 1906 edition: "Rules and regulations such as these, in the nature of the case, cannot be endowed with the fixity of rock-ribbed law. They are meant for the average case, and must be applied with a certain degree of elasticity." This is modest and becoming, but it is beside the point. The problem isn't that there are cases that fall outside the rules. The problem is that *there is a rule for every case*, and no style manual can hope to list them all. But we want the rules anyway. What we don't want to be told is "Be flexible," or "You have choices." "Choice" is another of modern life's false friends. Too many choices is precisely what makes Word such a nightmare to use, and what makes a hell of, for example, shopping for orange juice: Original, Grovestand, Home Style, Low Acid, Orange Banana, Extra Calcium, PulpFree, Lotsa Pulp, and so on.

The "Manual" does have lotsa lists, it's true. Still, it can be oddly silent about common usage mistakes. Sixty-seven pages are devoted to Names and Terms. Writers are instructed, in the subsection on Titles and Offices, to lowercase offices (pope, rabbi, ayatollah) and uppercase titles (Pope John Paul II, Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak ha-Kohen Kuk, Ayatollah Khomeini). The authors do not, however, warn against the frequent and well-meaning substitution of "Dr." for "Professor." Contrary to the assumption informing this practice, "doctor" is not the higher-status term; virtually all professors are doctors, but by no means are all doctors professors.

Chicago prefers a "down" style for the names of political and cultural movements (anarchist, mugwump, abstract expressionism), but this is possibly due to the desire to have a sleeker and more modern-looking page, for the rule runs into hard cases rather quickly. The authors concede right at the outset of the subsection on Names of Organizations that efforts to distinguish, by upper- and lowercase, between communism as an ideology and Communism as a political party are usually hopeless (was John F. Kennedy an anti-communist or an anti-Communist, or both?), and that Communist and Communism might as well



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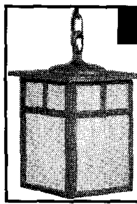

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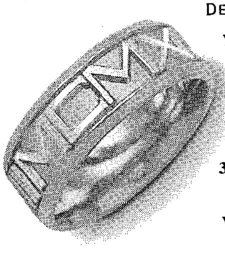

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be uppercased everywhere they appear. On the other hand, they countenance "nazi" as an adjective ("nazi tactics," as opposed to "the Nazis' tactics")—but what about "marxist"? The "Manual" does not propose this as an option.

The authors declare for pop art but do not mention popism (or Popism) and for conceptualism without mentioning conceptual art (or Conceptual Art). They have heard of structuralism and postmodernism (both lowercase) but (like Microsoft) do not recognize poststructuralism (this from one of Derrida's American publishers). Pragmatism (the philosophy) is unlisted, but it can create problems; George W. Bush is (arguably) a pragmatist, but he is no Pragmatist. "Classicism" is lowercased, but "romanticism" is "sometimes capitalized to avoid ambiguity"—though if you were capitalizing "Romanticism" it would look silly to lowercase "classicism" in the same paragraph. The authors scoff, delightfully, at brand-name and trademark shibboleths. Despite corporate bluster, they point out, there is no legal requirement to use ® or ™, as the Motion Picture Academy wants you to do with Oscar, or to write "Kleenex facial tissue" instead of "Kleenex," as the makers of Kleenex would like you to do when referring to their fine product. Less helpfully, the authors offer "photocopier" as a generic alternative to "Xerox machine," but do not explain whether you Xerox or xerox a piece of paper.

The section on Ellipses is seven pages. The authors distinguish between a three-dot method, a three-or-four-dot method, and what they designate "the rigorous method" (with the unfortunate implication that the other methods are for scholarly lightweights). For some reason, they do not address, even in the "rigorous" section, the problem of quoting a passage that includes ellipses in the original. Does placing brackets around the ellipsis imply that the ellipsis was interpolated or that it was not? The "Manual" authors now recommend disposing of the periods in the abbreviation of academic degrees (PhD instead of Ph.D.). On the important matter of the correct abbreviation of United States, though, the authors strike a note that recurs, all too disturbingly, in other places in the "Manual." It is the note of permissiveness. "*U.S.* traditionally appears with periods," they advise. And then—it's almost a non sequitur—"Periods may nonetheless be omitted in most contexts. Writers and editors need to weigh tradition against consistency." The mental fuse is shorted. You had always thought that tradition *was* consistency. Also, as long as the authors are into lists, would it not have been helpful to list that small number of proper names which must, in all circumstances, be preceded by Mr.?

Mr. Rogers
Mr. Shawn
Mr. T
Mr. Tambourine Man
Mr. Tibbs

The sections that people who are not operating a printing press will consult most often are the two devoted to Documentation. But Documentation is where the "Manual" 's ecumenism starts to shade into anarchism (the condition, not the party). Consider the subsection on Series (that is, books published in a series with, usually, a general editor). The editor of the series, the "Manual" says, is "usually omitted, but see 17.92-93." Abbreviations for volume and number "may be omitted." The series title "may be omitted to save space." Some works "may be treated bibliographically either as multivolume works or as a series of volumes," depending on "the emphasis." And when a series has gone on so long that the editors re-start the numbering as "new series" or "second series," we learn that "books in the old series are identified by *o.s.*, *1st ser.*, or whatever fits." At which point the sleep-deprived might decide that, on due and balanced consideration, *nothing* is what fits, and move on.

Some people will complain that the new "Chicago Manual" is too long. These people do not understand the nature of style. There is, if not a right way, a best way to do every single thing, down to the proverbial dotting of the "i." Relativism is fine for the big moral questions, where we can never know for sure; but in arbitrary realms like form and usage even small doses of relativism are lethal. The "Manual" is not too long. It is not long enough. It will never be long enough. The perfect manual of style would be like the perfect map of the world: exactly coterminous with its subject, containing a rule for every word of every sentence. We would need an extra universe to accommodate it. It would be worth it. ◆

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Stock markets can be puzzling things. Earlier this year, Wall Street analysts were complaining that uncertainty about Iraq was preventing a sustained rally. On Wednesday, April 9th, when the Marines entered downtown Baghdad and toppled a statue of Saddam Hussein, much of this war-related uncertainty dissipated. Yet the Dow Jones Industrial Average responded by falling more than a hundred points, to close at 8,197.94, below the level at which it was trading when the war began. If stock markets react to economic fundamentals, surely the news that the Iraqi conflict was almost over should have boosted prices. After all, a rapid military victory was seen as a precursor to lower oil prices and higher consumer confidence. So where was the widely expected "peace rally"?

Do stock prices really change at random?

As it happened, the stock-market rally had taken place before the war even began. On March 11th, when negotiations over a second United Nations resolution were breaking down, the Dow closed at 7,524.06, its lowest level in several months. But during the next week, while American and British forces were preparing to strike, stock prices rose sharply. On March 19th, when the bombs started falling on Baghdad, the Dow broke through 8,200. Two days later, when the land war began in earnest, it closed at 8,521.97. In just ten days, it had risen almost a thousand points.

To economists, there's nothing strange about a peace rally before hostilities commence. They tend to view the stock market as a giant calculating machine, which spews out prices that take into account all the available information about the past, the present, and the future. Twelve years ago, after the allied victory in the first Gulf War, the Dow jumped more than fifteen per cent within a few weeks. This time, investors were betting on a rerun of the 1991 military campaign, so they moved their money into the stock market during the middle of March, pushing the Dow up thirteen per cent before a single Iraqi town had fallen. By the time the statue of Saddam came down, the good news had already been reflected in the market, so prices fell. What seemed nonsensical was actually perfectly rational. Or was it?

Modern stock markets date back to seventeenth-century Amsterdam, which was then the financial capital of Europe. The science of stock valuation is more recent: for a long time, most scholars considered the stock market to be governed by moods and caprice, placing it beyond the scope of rigorous analysis. Then, starting around the time of the Great Depression, some economists began to give the matter a second look.

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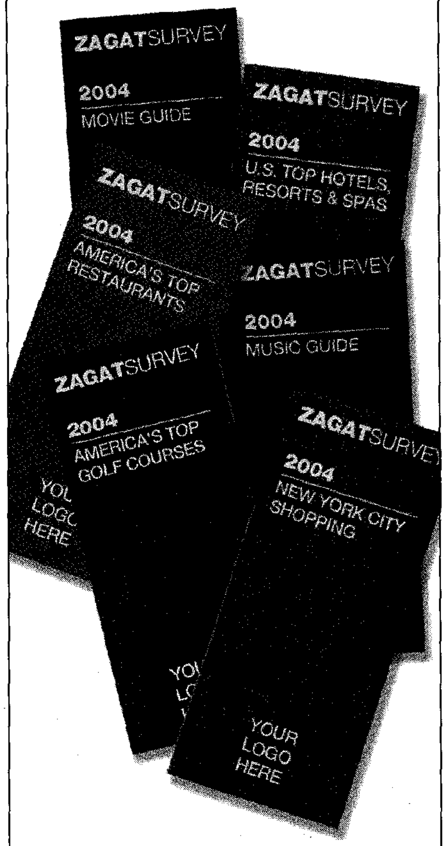

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out of business. If the stock is trading below this threshold, which economists refer to as its "intrinsic value," it makes sense to buy it and enjoy the dividends to come. If the stock is trading above its intrinsic value, it ought to be sold. But how do you work out what the intrinsic value is?

During the nineteen-thirties, a Harvard-trained investment analyst named John Burr Williams came up with an answer. Using little more than high-school arithmetic, he devised an ingeniously simple formula—the dividend discount model—which can be used to convert a future stream of dividends into today's stock price. Still, Williams's approach had a drawback. Since the future is inherently uncertain, nobody knows for sure what dividend, if any, a company will be paying a decade from now. The best that investors can do is hazard a guess on the basis of its past payouts and whatever is currently known about its prospects. That's what most of Williams's successors on Wall Street spend their time doing.

Valuing companies based on the information contained in their financial statements constitutes an entire discipline, much of it established by Benjamin Graham and David Dodd in their 1934 textbook, "Security Analysis." Graham, who taught at Columbia Business School for years, and numbered Warren Buffett among his students, is regarded as the pioneer of "value investing," the painstaking pursuit of cheap stocks. In 1949, Graham explained his methods to the general public in "The Intelligent Investor," a work that HarperBusiness has just reissued ($19.95), with a new introduction and running commentary by the journalist Jason Zweig. Buffett has described it as "by far the best book on investing ever written," and although the case studies it cites are now decades old, its practical advice on how to look at balance sheets and income statements is timeless. Followers of the Graham-Buffett approach to the stock market love nothing better than to spend an evening with a pencil and a calculator going through a stack of annual reports, trying to work out whether a company is trading above or below its intrinsic value.

Is all this hard work worth it? Most economists of the postwar generation

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were skeptical. They believed in what has come to be known as the Efficient Markets Hypothesis, or E.M.H., which holds that a company's stock prices already reflect all the available information about that company's prospects. If a piece of information or analysis were really valuable, E.M.H. proponents say, other smart investors would already have acted on it, thereby eliminating the chance to make a killing. Trying to be an "intelligent investor," by doing the arcane analysis that Graham recommended, was a mug's game.

E.M.H., in one version or another, held sway in universities and business schools for more than a quarter of a century; even today, it is routinely taught to M.B.A. students. One of the people responsible for this state of affairs is Burton G. Malkiel, the Chemical Bank Chairman's Professor of Economics at Princeton. Back in 1973, Malkiel, who was then a little-known professor, published a book entitled "A Random Walk Down Wall Street," which expounded efficient-markets theory for the layman. To the surprise of many, not least the author, it turned into one of the most durable investment guides ever written. Marking the thirtieth anniversary of the original publication, Norton has released a revised and updated eighth edition ($29.95).

When I first read "A Random Walk Down Wall Street," in the nineteen-eighties, I wondered how such a scholarly book could have become so popular. Professors, when they venture outside the realm of academic publishing, are invariably advised to keep things simple, avoid statistics, and, at all costs, shun mathematical symbols. Either Malkiel didn't receive this advice or he ignored it. Though he started out with some colorful material about famous speculative episodes like the South Sea Bubble and the Great Crash of 1929, the heart of his book is an exposition of modern portfolio theory, which includes, horror of horrors, several equations. Yet "A Random Walk Down Wall Street" has sold more than a million copies—probably because readers who work their way through it are rewarded with some genuinely arresting insights.

Once you posit that stock prices already reflect everything that can be known about the future, Malkiel explained, predicting how the market will behave tomorrow, or next month, isn't just difficult; it's impossible. In such an "efficient" environment, the only sensible thing we can say about the stock market is that it will continue to fluctuate from day to day, with no discernible pattern. Like a drunk staggering home from the bar, it will lurch one way or another, depending on the laws of chance. To use the language of statistics, the market will follow a "random walk."

In a random world, there's no way that investors—whether they're Wall Street analysts or taxi-drivers studying the business pages at red lights—can consistently outperform the market. No matter how smart and diligent investors may be, they will do just as well, if not better, throwing darts at the stock pages of the *Wall Street Journal*. (The dust jacket of "A Random Walk Down Wall Street" features a dart and a newspaper.) Malkiel advised investors to invest in a broad-based mutual fund that tracks the market, contribute to it regularly, and leave things at that. His influence has helped spur the growth of "index funds," which contain all the stocks in a given index, such as the S. & P. 500. Malkiel himself is now a director of the Vanguard Group, the biggest manager of index funds.

Although he popularized the E.M.H., Malkiel didn't create it. Like many modern economic theories, it emerged from Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Hyde Park, Chicago. In 1965, Paul Samuelson, the M.I.T. polymath who was the first American to win the Nobel Prize in Economics, published a paper entitled "Proof That Properly Anticipated Prices Fluctuate Randomly." Soon after that, Eugene Fama, a young Chicago economist, defined an efficient market as one in which prices always accurately reflect the available information. Various studies done by Fama and other economists appeared to confirm that stock prices fluctuate randomly, and that popular investment strategies, like buying "value" stocks or "growth" stocks, didn't work. The only way to beat the market, this research concluded, was to accumulate speculative, high-risk stocks in small companies—a strategy, however, that would also expose you to big downswings. By 1978, Michael Jensen, another Chicago-trained economist, de-

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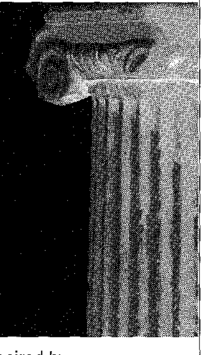

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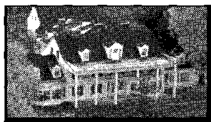

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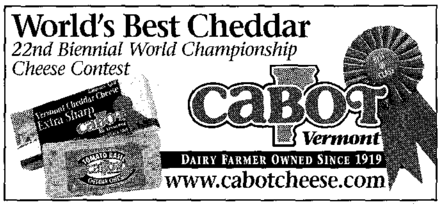

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clared, "There is no other proposition in economics which has more solid empirical evidence supporting it than the Efficient Markets Hypothesis." E.M.H. believers held the best professorships and edited the leading journals. Challenging the ruling wisdom was no trivial matter, especially for an ambitious young scholar.

Only a few renegades and oddballs took the risk. Victor Niederhoffer, who completed a Ph.D. in finance at the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business, was one of them. In his 1997 memoir, "The Education of a Speculator," Niederhoffer described running into a group of Chicago professors and graduate students who were trying to find patterns in stock prices: "One of the students was pointing to some output while querying the professors, 'Well, what if we really do find something? We'll be up the creek. It won't be consistent with the random walk model.' The younger professor replied, 'Don't worry, we'll cross that bridge in the unlikely event we come to it.' " When Niederhoffer presented his thesis, which claimed that stock prices could be predicted on the basis of past movements, the other members of his department savaged him. After teaching at Berkeley for a while, he fled to Wall Street, where he became a well-known trader. Eventually, he teamed up with George Soros, the most famous speculator of the modern era, and also launched his own hedge fund, making himself rich in the process.

The intellectual environment Niederhoffer described didn't last forever. During the past decade, a new generation of economists has conducted an overdue reassessment of how financial markets work. Embracing ideas from psychology and sociology, these scholars, some of whom identify themselves with the emerging field of "behavioral finance," challenge not only many of the old empirical findings but the basic assumptions of the E.M.H.

The new approach starts from the belief that investors routinely fall prey to fear, envy, overconfidence, faddism, and other recognizably human frailties. As Harvard's Andrei Shleifer points out in his book "Inefficient Markets: An Introduction to Behavioral Finance," "In-

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Who was Father—a bandage, a mustache,
from time to time a saddening salt-and-pepper beard.
Mother? Some sort of monger—I see her with a pink fish,
my bodyweight, dill hairs clinging to her hands.
"Daddy is tired," I am said to have said,
and then I'd sing to him, sleeping.
He was an athlete, dislocated. He said to my sister, Forget Me Not.
Mother was never in the same room with any of us.
I think she was a hostess, in which case I should say,
Thank you for having me.

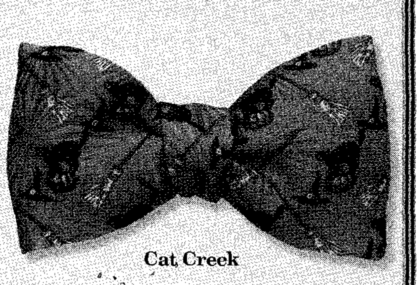
—*Dana Goodyear*

vestors follow the advice of financial gurus, fail to diversify, actively trade stocks and churn their portfolios, sell winning stocks and hold on to losing stocks thereby increasing their tax liabilities, buy and sell actively and expensively managed mutual funds, follow stock price patterns and other popular models. In short, investors hardly adopt the passive strategies expected of uninformed market participants by the efficient markets theory."

Since real people inhabit the market, there is little reason to suppose that stock prices will remain tied to economic fundamentals: they are more likely to swing dramatically, leading to bubbles on the upside and crashes on the downside. And, despite what some E.M.H. defenders claim, the presence of a few fully rational investors isn't enough to prevent things from going haywire. Instead of restoring sanity to the market by selling overvalued stocks and buying undervalued ones, the clever players are just as likely to do the opposite. When they see hordes of people buying, they may well rush in ahead of them, hoping to sell out to one of the "greater fools" at a higher price. When they see a wave of pessimism sweeping the market, they may try to sell ahead of it, so they can pick up some bargains at the bottom. In either case, the actions of the "rational" investors will accentuate the market's gyrations.

Attempting to run ahead of the crowd is a strategy that sophisticated investors, from Keynes to Soros, have long pursued. It is also the way that many hedge funds, which manage money on behalf of wealthy clients, invest today. If the stock market were truly random, these expert investors would fare no better than those who buy and hold index funds. But, in the bear market of 2000-02, hedge funds, on average, outperformed the market. One possibility, which is consistent with the Efficient Markets Hypothesis, is that the fund managers took big risks and got lucky. A more convincing explanation is that they correctly predicted that prices would continue to fall and traded accordingly, selling short overvalued stocks. (Now that the market has rallied somewhat, hedge funds have turned into big buyers.)

There is also recent academic evidence that predictable patterns in the stock market do exist. Andrew W. Lo, an economist at M.I.T., and A. Craig MacKinlay, of Wharton, demonstrated that between 1962 and 1985 stock prices didn't fluctuate randomly at all—not over short periods, anyway. If the Dow went up in a given week, it was likely to go up the next week as well. If it fell one week, it probably fell the next week, too. These results, which were published in a dense tract entitled "A Non-Random Walk Down Wall Street," imply that so-called "momentum investors," who follow short-term trends, may be onto something. Over months and years, rather than days and weeks, stock prices tend to revert to normal levels, but this, too, is a pattern, and it creates opportunities for savvy investors with longer time horizons. Several researchers have found that,



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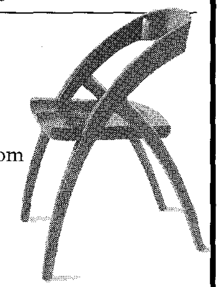

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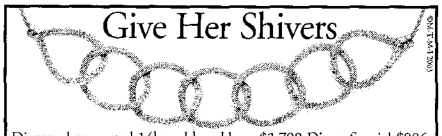

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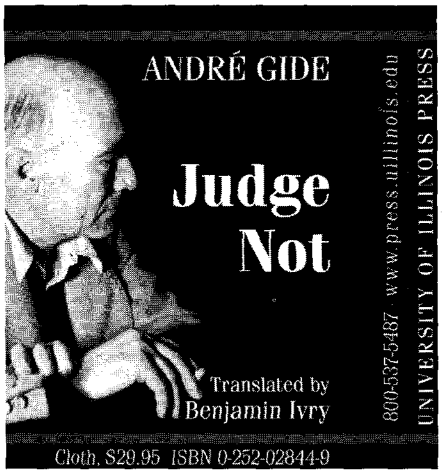
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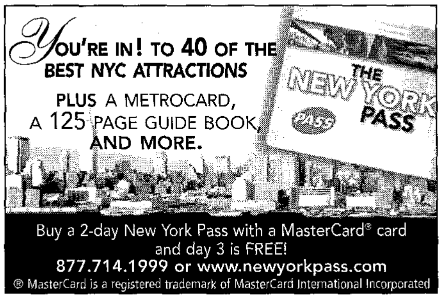
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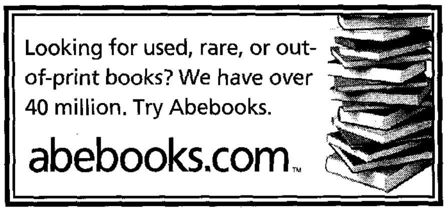
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for successive periods of between two and five years, stocks that do well in one period tend to do badly in the next, and vice versa. If this "mean reversion" persists in the future, investors who avoid "hot" stocks and buy ones that are out of favor can expect to reap superior returns.

But timing isn't the only thing that counts in the "behavioral" approach to investing. Price matters, too. In a series of results that suggest Benjamin Graham was right all along, researchers have found that over the long term cheap stocks do better than expensive stocks. Companies with low stock prices relative to their earnings outperform stocks with high price-to-earnings—PE—ratios; companies with low stock prices relative to the accounting value of their assets outperform stocks with high "price-to-book" ratios; and stocks with high dividend yields outperform stocks with low dividend yields. You don't have to be a corporate insider or a Wall Street professional to apply these rules to your own portfolio. These days, the PE ratio and other valuation measures are readily available on Web sites, such as Yahoo! Finance and CBS MarketWatch.

Malkiel is aware that his favorite theory has been attacked, and in the new edition of "A Random Walk Down Wall Street" he responds to the critics. Most of the stock-market regularities that have been identified are too weak and unreliable for ordinary investors to profit from, he argues, and even if some of them could be exploited, the very act of doing so would quickly eliminate the possibility of outsized returns. Consequently, buying and holding a broad-based market-index fund remains "the only game in town." And yet Malkiel also expresses "considerable intellectual sympathy" for value investing of the type practiced by Warren Buffett. Indeed, he includes a chart showing how, during the nineteen-eighties, stocks with low price-to-earnings ratios yielded above-average returns, even adjusted for risk.

In view of such findings, Malkiel now espouses what he calls a "middle road" between the efficient-markets school and the behaviorists. He has dropped the claim that stock prices always reflect the best possible estimates of fundamental values, but he insists that markets don't act irrationally for very long, and that trying to beat them remains a foolish and dangerous pursuit. His account of the Internet stock mania illuminates this modified theory, which might be termed the neo-E.M.H.: sure, many stocks were fantastically overvalued during the Internet bubble, but the bubble eventually burst, didn't it? Malkiel concludes that the market "corrects any irrationality—albeit in its own slow, inexorable fashion."

This is not entirely persuasive—how can a market be slow and inexorable but also efficient?—but Malkiel's practical warnings are well taken. No matter how smart you are, trying to outguess the market is a perilous business. For most people, the safest bet is to stick to index funds, and to further diversify with bonds, real estate, and foreign securities. (In a deflationary environment, cash also has its merits.) It's one thing to know that the Internet bubble is going to burst; to make money, you need to know *when*. People who tried to cash in by shorting Internet stocks in 1998 or 1999 got burned. Victor Niederhoffer's experience provides another cautionary tale. Soon after his book was published, in 1997, he placed some misguided bets in the currency markets and went bust.

Investors of all persuasions would do well to keep in mind a point that Graham made many years ago. In the short term, the stock market is a voting machine, which reflects the whims of a fickle public; in the long term, however, it is a weighing machine, which values firms on the basis of the cash they return to investors. Unfortunately, it isn't always easy to say when the market is acting like a voting machine and when it's acting like a weighing machine. Despite the summer rally, the Dow is still twenty per cent below its 2000 peak, and the Nasdaq is down about sixty per cent. Perhaps these depressed levels reflect the votes of underconfident investors, so it's a good time to buy. Then again, historically speaking stock prices are still dangerously high relative to earnings, so it's a good time to sell. Which is it? If you think you know, by all means call your broker. He probably needs the business. ♦

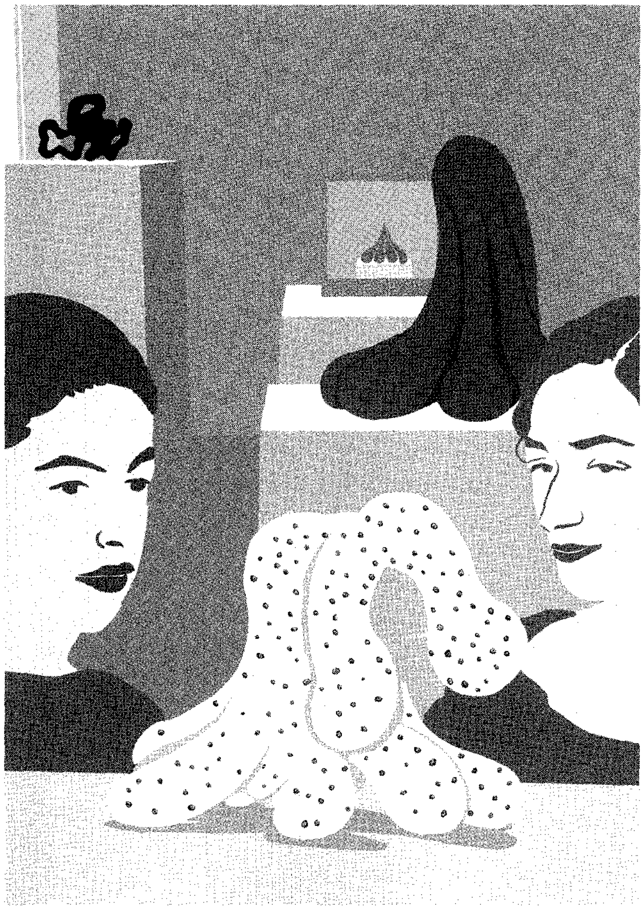
THE ART WORLD

FEATS OF CLAY

Ken Price's ceramic art.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

Ken Price, a veteran West Coast artist who is not nearly as well known in New York as he should be, is a ceramist and sculptor. His current show, at Matthew Marks, may be the most purely pleasurable in town, and one that affords a chance to think seriously about aesthetic enjoyment. What is pure pleasure in art? It isn't simple. Like white light, which is the sum of all colors, such pleasure subsumes a spectrum of ideas, feelings, and sensations, which, if one is so inclined, can be sorted out through a prism of analysis. Something similar might be said about all of our joys in life, which recent brain research asks us to imagine as particular cocktails of hormones and neurotransmitters. But artistic pleasure differs from other kinds in being deliberately structured and thus encouraging to analysis, which is fun for the rational mind. Each art engages us in its own way. Most mediums—music, literature, movies—unfold in time; we pass brief stretches of our lives in their thrall. Thinking about their effects requires reconstructive memory. Visual art sits still and lets us alternate looking and thinking, at our leisure. We comprehend nuts and bolts of happiness even as we are experiencing it. That's a big reason why we would just as soon not do without visual art.



Price's show may be the most purely pleasurable in town.

The objects that occasion these thoughts rest on standard pedestals and are spotlighted like jewels. They are globby shapes in modelled and fired clay with parti-colored, speckly, suave surfaces. They range in height from only three and a half inches to nearly two feet; the little ones occupy elegant cases made of wood and glass. The works' slightly grotesque abstract forms evoke animal paws, sluggish cascades of mud, clubfooted octopuses, pieces of fabric plucked up in the middle, phalli rising from lobes of pendulous flesh, clusters of Kilroy-was-here noses, sculptures by Brancusi and Henry Moore, and no end of other things—sometimes all at once. One piece remotely suggests a figure in the lotus position whose lump of a head has drooped to the ground on a tragically stretched neck. Another is a frisky Laocoön of snaky loops around a blob that has a neat round hole in it. Saggy aspects of the forms dramatize gravity, even as intricate surfaces and lambent colors vaporize heaviness in the eye. Price's balance of bodily and optical appeal is masterly. One succumbs to it with a glad sigh.

You have never seen subtler hues, which Price achieves by sanding down, to glassy smoothness, multiple layers of acrylic paint in different colors, producing crazed patterns, like psychedelic lichen. "Iridescent rosy maroon," one observer guessed, standing back from a piece called "Oofus." "Metaphysical fuchsia?" I had scribbled hysterically in my notebook, apropos the same work. Other pieces call to mind other color words—puce, cream, chartreuse, peat, liverish, brass—that seem almost right but are, in the end, wrong. In truth, the works offer contradictory orders of chromatic experience up close and from afar. Viewed at a distance, "Whitey" is an aurora of effulgent white gold. As one approaches, the impression breaks down into a matte dusty pink that is pitted with shades of purple and stained with smatterings of pale green. How you get white gold from that mixture, I cannot explain; but there it is. Price's color—which is unphotographable, because any single viewing distance belies a continuum of perceptions—is neither pretty nor visceral, sweet nor sour. It belongs to the works as matter-of-factly as eye color belongs to the eyes of somebody you happen to be mad about. The show is coolly, inexhaustibly beautiful.

Price, who is sixty-eight years old and lives in Taos, New Mexico, while keeping a studio in his native Los Angeles, emerged in the early nineteen-sixties as a brilliantly contrary student of Peter Voulkos, who had launched a West Coast movement in ceramic art with huge, tortuous vessels and scored and slashed platters that infuse Asian traditions with Abstract Expressionist bravura. Price eschewed Voulkos's virile expansiveness to work small, making exquisite egg shapes that sprout erotic, worrisome tendrils. He proceeded to develop abstract variations on cup, tea-

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pot, and vase forms with faceted asymmetrical compositions, glazed in primary colors, that are like pocket distillations—which turn monumental in memory—of modern style from Cubism through De Stijl to minimalism. The art-loving California architect Frank Gehry has acknowledged being influenced by Price's work. Come to think of it, if you imagine a synthesis of Price's geometric vessels and Richard Serra's curved steel-slab sculptures, Gehry's revolutionizing architectural vocabulary—though hardly his genius—is rather thoroughly accounted for.

Price has always been a tough sell in New York, and is practically unknown in Europe, owing to a hardwired prejudice in the art world against ceramics as a minor, craftsy, retrograde medium. To overeducated eyes, a perceived relation of an art object to conventions of domestic function is corny unless pointedly ironic. Other cultures—Japanese and Chinese, Mexican and Southwest Native American—have *not* shared this bias. Alertness to those traditions is a richly civilized element of certain Californian sensibilities. Price's art, witty and sophisticated while shunning irony, is grounded in the aesthetic quiddity of ceramics. Painting exercises the eye; sculpture echoes the body. Ceramics express and are addressed to the hand. They acquire their full meaning within arm's reach, in the confiding zone—the ambit of embraces—where the sovereignty of sight blurs into that of touch. Price's current work borrows effects of both painting and sculpture. It adopts standoffish conventions of "art" display, notably pedestals. (Shelves, tables, and vitrines are customary for ceramics.) The pieces are painted rather than glazed (coated rather than, in the usual way of ceramics, imbued with color), and they forbid being picked up—some by being encased, others by promising back injury if you were to try. But their identity as intimate objects handmade in clay prevails, exerting a subliminal tug. They generate a feeling of private space—of home, even—around themselves.

Given the sturdy resistance in New York to taking ceramics seriously, Price's appearance at the *echt* New York Matthew Marks Gallery is an event. I asked Marks about it, and he said that he was swayed by the enthusiasm for Price of other artists in his stable, including Brice Marden and Ellsworth Kelly. The triennial exhibition Site Santa Fe in 2001, curated by the critic Dave Hickey, memorably featured a room in which a four-part abstract painting by Kelly faced four pedestalled Prices. The juxtaposition was electrifying for me and for everyone I know who saw it. It pinned down the refined-vernacular character of Kelly's art—wispy recollections, in crisply shaped canvases, of forms in the everyday world. And Price's works responded, holding their own with the high formal artifice that underlies their prankish style. It was a Fred-and-Ginger moment. Pure pleasure steamrolled categorical distinctions between big, dapper abstract painting and small, jaunty ceramic whatsits. Kelly and Price had nothing in common except a rigorous, virtually scientific commitment to cultivating seemingly effortless bliss. That was plenty.

Price's belated prestige signifies something that is afoot in the culture of art these days: a shift of emphasis away from conceptualist modes that set ideas above experience and toward aesthetic practices that put experience first. A fine old slogan of the poet William Carlos Williams may be due another inning: "No ideas but in things." This development is more a marginal correction than a sea change. Institutional and academic uses of art assure the continued dominance of installations, videos, and other mediums that advertise redeeming social importance of some sort or, at least, provide crowd-congenial entertainment. Limiting art's audience to aesthetically sensitive individuals, as Kelly and Price do, is indefensibly undemocratic, as anyone can see. Still, I imagine that even critically puritanical art folks have doubts now and then—twinges of anti-conscience, perhaps—about suppressing the gratuitous pursuit of mindful joy. Isn't it a youthful inkling of such transcendence that gets somebody interested in art in the first place? ♦

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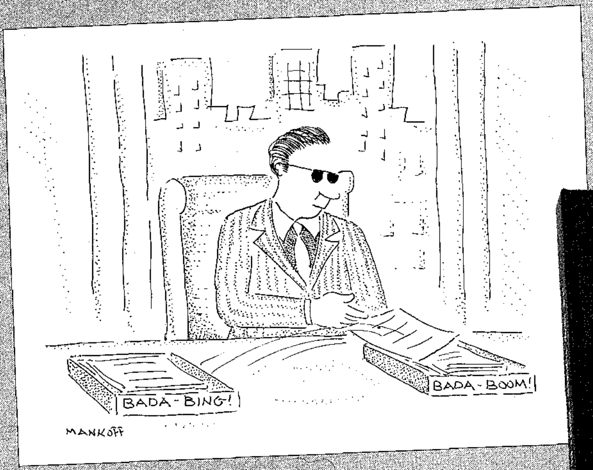
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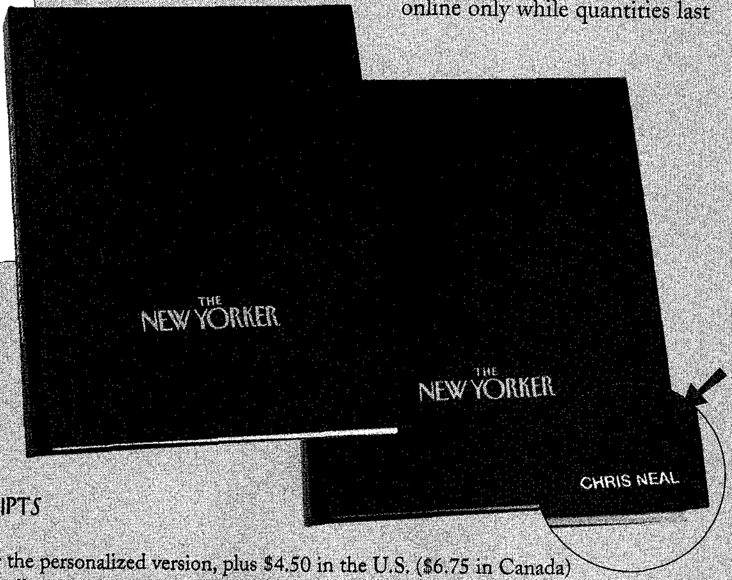
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THE THEATRE

CULTURAL GAS

The discreet harm of the bourgeoisie.

BY JOHN LAHR

"Rhubarb," it says in my dictionary of slang, is Second World War vernacular for a "low-level strafing mission." So it's no coincidence that the curtain rises on Theresa Rebeck and Alexandra Gersten-Vassilaros's witty, pugnacious play "Omnium Gatherum" (at the Variety Arts) to the sound of a low-flying chopper and the sight of a sumptuous Manhattan dinner party, at which the first three lines of dialogue are, well, the word "rhubarb." If, however, "rhubarb" for you is, first and foremost, baseball lingo for a bench-emptying brawl, you'll still get the point: the play is more or less an ideological free-for-all, and its opening lines mischievously foreshadow its authors' intention—to punch the lights out of every intellectual pose.

A dinner of intellectual devastation in "Omnium Gatherum."

Under the confident and precocious direction of Will Frears, "Omnium Gatherum" is full of polemicists, but it is not itself a polemic. It is, more accurately, a provocation—a show of theatrical fireworks to enlighten our darkness. As the noisy dinner guests argue their way through post-September 11th hysteria, every position seems to have a point. Caught in a pinball machine of educated debate, we ricochet between arguments with a velocity that ends, finally, at full tilt. In the process, we come to understand the rumble of panic behind both dialectic and desire. The characters share with the audience a contemporary doom: they know too much and too little; the world is at once too close and too far away, and they are swamped with data. "We all got this on the Internet!" a hectoring right-winger called Roger (Phillip Clark) says, as he swats away the arguments of a bow-tied Arab scholar named Khalid (Edward A. Hajj) like a pesky mosquito.

Among other targets, terrorism attacks thought; the dinner party in "Omnium Gatherum" is a paradigm of intellectual devastation and moral paralysis. "We're listening, recap, recap," the hostess, Suzie (the superb Kristine Nielsen), clucks to her guests as she hovers over them. But, of course, nobody is listening. Jean Renoir once said the trouble with life is that everyone has his reasons. In the course of the meal, isms—Marxism, veganism, capitalism, fundamentalism, sexism, feminism, patriotism, imperialism, monetarism, Zionism—are passed around the table like nuts at Christmas, until the only ism missing is optimism.

Here American plenty is a source of percolating disgust. The evening's lavish menu, described in exhaustive detail, consists of "imported water," wild salmon from the Columbia River, and "freshly blessed lamb"—which, Suzie tells us, is "a dish from south of Pakistan, a favorite among moderate Shiites"—with "a tower of sliced ruby-crescent fingerlings" (that's potatoes to you). The icicle chandelier and the behemoth mahogany-panelled wall of David Rockwell's set lend visually grandiose accents to Suzie's vulgar behavior. A former caterer, she is now a Martha Stewart-like goddess of domestic art—a guru of greed and a whirlwind of punctilious control. Slapping a guest's hand, she cries out, "Oh, no, no. Bread is over!" Suzie paints a hilarious stage picture of the collision of desperation and solace. "People were looking for beauty in their lives," she says. " 'Esthetic Serenity,' I call it." She can't hear her own smugness—"I'm aware of my wealth. I used to be middle-class. I know how that feels"—but we can. Her cringe-inducing, self-referential banter is a perfectly pitched indictment of wealth. She has the best of everything and knows the name of nothing. "This is an exquisite Tenuta dell' Ornellaia from the House of Something, the year, let's see, squinting, squinting, nineteen hundred and eighty-five," she says of the wine. She eats the food of foreign countries, but, when the notion of sharing with them is raised, she draws a blank. "Share more with whom?" she asks, startled.

"Here's to forgetting," a Cambridge-educated left-winger called Terrence (Dean Nolen) says, raising his glass. A persecuted and persecuting vegan, Lydia (the excellent Jenny Bacon), responds, "Forget what?" Forgetfulness is, of course, what the hubbub is about: the talk, the food, the argument, the wealth, even the terrorism—in action, you can forget the humiliation of envy. Toward the end, as the play ratchets up to the allegorical, we begin to see what it is that the characters have forgotten: they are in a hell of their own making. The term "omnium gatherum" is defined in the play as "a collection of peculiar souls"; and "souls" is the operative word here. When Suzie produces for her guests' delectation an actual fulminating terrorist called Mohammed (Amir Arison), he turns out to be a ghost—but not before attacking his fellow-Arab and being gang-tackled by the group, who first manacle him with napkins and then allow him a place at the table. "Is anyone else here dead?" Terrence asks, a line that neatly allows the real and the surreal to coexist onstage. "Are we in hell?" Khalid adds. "I feel myself . . . heartbroken."

The play, it seems to me, shows us the conundrum of capitalist survival. "May I have more of that?" Mohammed says politely as he sits at the oppressor's table, eating her dessert. "Of course, darling," Suzie answers. When, toward the end of the play, some of the guests, pursuing their solitary pleasures, dance to Frank Sinatra's "I've Got the World on a String," that string appears to be both imperial and threadbare. And the scene, which begins as a sort of sardonic grace note, builds to a full-fledged apocalypse of fear and loathing—a sort of *tableau mordant*. For the satire, it's a wow ending; for the young director, it's a wow beginning.

"Why must the show go on?" Noël Coward joked in song. The same thought came to me after about ten minutes of Bill Irwin's "The Harlequin Studies" (at the Signature), which, at a mere seventy-five minutes, feels interminable. For the great low comedians who carried the harlequin tradition riotously into the twentieth century—Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Harpo and Groucho Marx—clowning was an act of revenge; for Irwin, who pays homage to a few of them in the show, which he also wrote, it is an act of nostalgia. The cavorting Merry-Andrews whom Irwin rightly admires saw themselves as businessmen; they achieved art in spite of themselves. "I never realized that I was doing anything but trying to make people laugh when I threw my custard pies and took my pratfalls," Keaton said. Irwin, on the other hand, thinks only of art, and he can't approach it. The reason for this is transparent. In their physical high jinks, the great clowns revealed themselves—their lusts, their terrors, their fury. They were metaphors of being. Irwin, instead of revealing himself, hides behind the harlequin façade; he is not so much a metaphor as a quotation mark.

As the show begins, he and his sidekick and accompanist, Doug Skinner, materialize from a trunk, wearing mortarboards and scholar's robes. "Character, in the realm of theatre, could be said to be, perhaps, a meeting of Archetype and Individual," Irwin begins. Hmm. In "The Fairground Booth," a seminal essay on the importance of clowning and a kinetic theatre, the avant-garde Russian director Vsevolod Meyerhold argued that the clown's vulgarity, noise, self-sufficiency, and movement should liberate theatre from the reading room. Irwin puts it back.

As an actor, Irwin has successfully played roles that ranged from Lucky in Mike Nichols's "Waiting for Godot" to Mr. Noodle on "Sesame Street"; he has done fine work in Molière, and on Broadway, with David Shiner, in "Fool Moon." "The Harlequin Studies," however, is a showcase for his limitations. As a physical comedian, he moves well enough and handles objects—especially his black cap—with some charm, but he is curiously devoid of personality, and the show offers very little to buoy him up: a few good sight gags, a little juggling, and a lot of mugging. The antic spirit of the harlequin is unbridled appetite and aggression—a drive that Irwin is unable to locate in himself or anywhere else in the show. Over the years, Irwin has been showered with praise—and even a MacArthur Fellowship—for his attempts to forge a new vaudeville. But I'm sorry to report that, judging by "The Harlequin Studies," he couldn't shine the shoes of the old clowns in whose footsteps he thinks he's following. ♦

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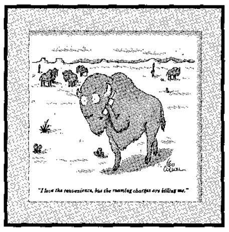

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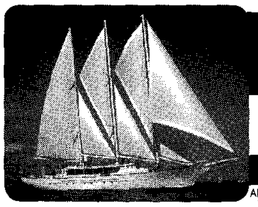

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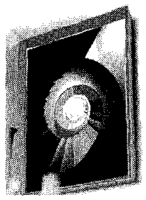

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

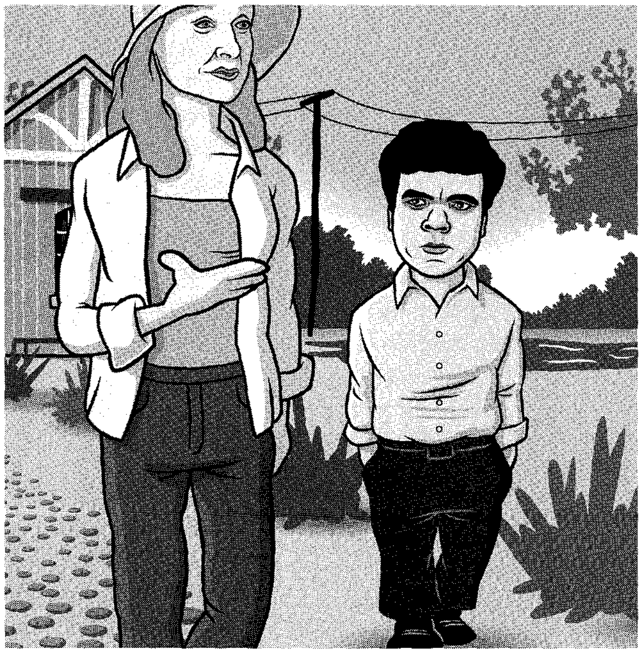
UNHAPPY TRAILS

"The Station Agent" and "Wonderland."

BY ANTHONY LANE

You can tell what a fine movie "The Station Agent" is from some of the noble institutions that are thanked in the final credits: Barry's Luncheonette, Good-to-Go Deli, and the inspiring Lunacy Beer. This was clearly a well-fed operation, and one that is proud to be provincial. The tale begins in Hoboken, where Fin (Peter Dinklage) works in a shop, selling and mending model railways. The cinematographer, Oliver Bokelberg, delivers placid shots of the storefronts, suggesting, first, that he knows his Walker Evans and, second, that the story will continue in the dizzy, cosmopolitan carnival that is today's Hoboken. Not so; Fin inherits a property in rural New Jersey, and that is where he, and "The Station Agent," must patiently put down roots.

Fin's new house is barely a home—just a squat, scruffy box without water or power. But he accepts it uncomplainingly, because he is that kind of a man, and because it is next to a railroad in Newfoundland, deep in Morris County, and for Fin, who loves trains and only trains, that makes it a bower of bliss. This place will, indeed, become his newfound land. Fin is four feet five inches tall; he is content to call himself a dwarf, and the film, written and directed by Tom McCarthy, follows suit, calmly swatting aside the old taunts ("Hey, where's Snow White?" a couple of louts cry as Fin walks down the street) and the newer strains of political correctness. "The Station Agent" is a film about acceptance, not just of the physical kind, but McCarthy is smart enough to realize that, if you preach acceptance, your movie will sicken and die. So, like Fin, he just gets on with the show, on the shrugging assumption that being small is, when you get down to it, no big deal.


Patricia Clarkson and Peter Dinklage in deep New Jersey.

Fin has a couple of neighbors. One of them, a Cuban called Joe (Bobby Cannavale), runs what may be the least visited hot-dog business in the Eastern United States. Every day, he parks his truck opposite Fin's front door and awaits the climactic moment when somebody will actually buy a cup of coffee. His most regular customer is Olivia (Patricia Clarkson), who lives alone in a swish house and drives a big car very badly. We learn that her young son died in a playground accident, and Clarkson offers an amazing rendition of a stunned soul—fumbling and swerving her way through life, managing to seem at once glassy and cracked. And that's it, really. "The Station Agent" is never going to be mistaken for an action movie, unless you count the delirious scene in which Joe guns his truck alongside a racing train, while Fin points a video camera at the engines and freight cars, to capture their blur for posterity. Such plot as there is depends on the three people—the loner, the loser, and the hopelessly lost—melting into friends, to a point where Joe and Olivia will, of their own volition, join the intrepid Fin on one of his thrilling strolls down a disused railroad track.

I remember Dinklage from that tremendous, once-and-for-all scene in Tom DiCillo's "Living in Oblivion," back in 1995, when his character was hired by a film director to appear in a dream sequence. Not before time, he marched off the set, arguing ferociously, and with perfect accuracy, that all that dwarfs were ever required to do in movies was skitter around in dream sequences, lending an instant flavor of secondhand surrealism. It was a funny speech, but behind it you caught a true and contagious moral exasperation, and since then I have never felt the same about the fantasies of Fellini and David Lynch, both of whom have toyed with the undersized. "The Station Agent" represents, among other things, Dinklage's best answer to those abusive imaginations—though not, I think, his chance for revenge, because there is nothing vindictive in his demeanor. The brilliance of Fin is that he reins in a lifetime of rage, and there is a determination in his eye, and in the line of his chin, that practiced moviegoers will, possibly to their surprise, identify as halfway to sexy—the world-weary smolder of the leading man.

That is why, when McCarthy does put a foot wrong, you feel the error keenly. Fin says he doesn't like bars, but one night we find him perched at his local drinking hole, tipping whiskey down his throat. Suddenly, he clambers onto a stool and bellows "Take a good look!" to the assembled patrons. The scene is shot in a loud and boozy haze; it shouts down the rest of the movie's style—all those exquisite stills of abandoned railway passenger cars, as serene as ancient monuments—and, to be honest, McCarthy could chop it out now and be none the poorer. We sense Fin's furies in every minute of this picture, and to watch them being released from their cage makes them harder, rather than easier, to believe in.

Tranquil films can ill afford the spasm of melodrama, and I winced at the fact that Olivia's estranged husband just happened to show up on the one morning when a drunken Joe and Fin had slept over at her house. Still, the awkwardness passes, and the sight of Joe wandering cheerfully into the shot, munching a bowl of cornflakes, or whatever, and hailing the baffled husband without concern, is my favorite encounter in the movie, and one of the few triumphant uses of cereal in modern cinema. Most of the plaudits—notably at the Sundance Film Festival, where McCarthy's movie won an Audience Award—have gone to Dinklage and Clarkson (at Sundance, she won a Special Jury Prize), yet it was Cannavale's Joe that stayed with me. Look at the way in which he sits down with a beer, drapes his long limbs around the place, and waits with unfeigned excitement to see what joy—a train going past, a car going past, a smoke—will break the tedium. Envious of Fin's absorption in a book, he brings along a copy of "All Quiet on the Western Front," and the two men settle into a quietness of their own. As for Fin's stature, Joe is far too tickled by the prospect of fresh conversation to worry about matters of height, although he can't help quizzing Fin as to whether he has ever made out with "a regular-sized chick." In brief, Joe is a good man who, until now, has found no outlet for his goodness—always a terrible fate. By that light, the arrival of Fin and the slow emergence of Olivia from her cocoon of grief mark nothing less than the avoidance of tragedy, for all concerned. You can feel the overwhelming wash of relief in the final scene, as McCarthy holds his nerve and closes his movie not just with a joke, which is rare enough, but with a joke about *librarians*—"glasses off, hair down, books flying," in the words of a wistful Joe. Is that a happy ending, or what?

Seldom have I seen an audience thrum with such expectation. There we were, waiting for "Wonderland," the new bio-pic of John Holmes. Down went the lights, up came the titles, and there was the cause of all the fuss: a flood of statistics, informing us that the late Mr. Holmes, as preëminent in the trouser department as his namesake Sherlock had been in the cerebellum, was the leading pornographic star of his time. That time was the nineteen-seventies and the early eighties, when Holmes made more than a thousand films, many of which, regrettably, eluded critical attention; when he performed under the touching sobriquet of Johnny Wadd; and when he is rumored to have slept with fourteen thousand women, though not all on the same evening.

Then came the hammer blow. "Wonderland," we were told, would be the story not of Holmes's Parnassian achievements as a love god but of what happened next. Whose bright idea was that? We didn't have to sit through "Seabiscuit: The Dog-Food Years," so what's with the late-period Holmes, seeing that the blue period was such fun? A Hollywood bent on nothing but aftermaths might be a gentler industry—there would be a certain charm in watching "Mr. and Mrs. Victor Laszlo Finish Up the Dishes and Sit Down to a Game of Canasta"—but, by and large, directors should be encouraged to go where the action is.

James Cox, however, the maker of "Wonderland," has other ideas. And so we are led through a murky and, it must be said, wholly uninvolving saga of substance abuse and related multiple murders. Thanks to the dim light, grainy film stock, and stir-fried editing procedures, my guess as to the guilty parties is as good as yours, but I think it was done by the drug baron's henchmen with the lead piping in the scuzzy Los Angeles apartment. Where Holmes fits into this farrago is beyond me, but Val Kilmer's mumbles and strivings in the principal role seem daringly designed to repel all sympathy, although I couldn't repress a pang of pity for the cocker spaniel that was clearly glued to the top of his head as a memorial to the seventies frizz of Holmes's prime. The other actors, not to be outdone, compete to deliver their most peculiar performances to date, and why a freaked-out Dylan McDermott and a near-wordless Janeane Garofalo chose to offer their services to this project must remain a secret between themselves and their maker. Compared with the grim and fractious brutality of "Wonderland," two hours of heaves and splatters from Johnny Wadd would come as an innocent delight. ♦

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THE BACK PAGE BY BRUCE McCALL

THE BOOK LIST THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

"The Flavor That Changed the World" (*Oleacanth Press; 365 pp.*)

Catherine the Great bathed her horses in it, Emily Dickinson was addicted to it, the Indians of the Amazon Basin have used it for centuries as a sandwich spread. Yet the eleventh-century Portuguese alchemist credited with inventing vanilla was actually seeking a rum-raisin elixir, and it was a French diplomat serving in Persia who first bottled it—just in time for the Russian Army to buy up his entire stock for its thirst-ravaged troops in the Crimean War. These are but a small sampling of the anecdotes and curiosities packed into this book. Suffice it to say that the taste buds of the world would soon rally around a single flavor for the first time in human memory. The rest is history.

"The House Cat That Changed the World" (*University of Perth-Amboy Press; 365 pp.*)

When Pharaoh Mingus II carried an Abyssinian kitten named Misty into his palace one day circa 2500 B.C., it marked the advent of the wild animal as household pet. An estimated 3.6 billion pets have since followed in a cat's cradle of domestic sagas too complex to be detailed here. Misty himself was soon dead, poisoned by high priests jealous of his influence and irked by his habit of defecating in the temple, but his favorite toy, a mummified miniature crocodile, can be seen today in the Cairo Smaller Mammal Museum. The author traces Misty's lineage over the millennia, concluding with a virtually airtight case for the feline star of Disney's "That Darn Cat!" being a direct descendant. The rest is history.

"The Ping-Pong Ball That Changed the World" (*Tinker, Evers & Chance; 365 pp.*)

Little did the gangly young astronomy student realize, when a Ping-Pong ball caromed off his paddle and vanished under a settee in the rec room of his parents' house in the South Dakota Badlands one winter's eve in 1926, that what occurred in the next few seconds would rock astronomical science and cause most of a continent on the dark side of a planet nine billion light-years away to be named after him. The student, of course, was Oswald Blingus, and when his errant ball bumped into a dust kitten under the settee it suggested that separate bodies of diverse densities could cohere, leading to the idea of the existence of galaxies. Blingus's theory was at first ridiculed, and the author movingly records the twists and turns of astronomical politics at mid-century—with surprise cameos by the Duke of Windsor and Jack Dempsey—too arcane to be gone into here. The rest is history.

"The Dishwater That Changed the World" (*A Fran and Delbert MacAdoo Book; 365 pp.*)

The British scientist-inventor Sir Waldo Motley was accidentally flushed down the World's Largest Kitchen Drain at the Paris Domestic Arts Exposition of 1890, but not before he had accidentally spilled a solution of ketone, creosote, and lime juice into a dishpan in his laboratory. He returned a day later to find the crockery and glassware squeaky-clean—an accidental chemical chain reaction had created the world's first effective dishwashing liquid. How Sir Waldo battled Big Soap, the German munitions industry, and numerous litigious quacks (including Thomas Edison) in his quest to better the homemaker's life is entrancingly discursive, and those who think the story belongs to the musty past should note that Betty Friedan used the time saved in her household chores by this kitchen-sink miracle to begin the writings that would one day give birth to the feminist movement. The rest is history.

"The Pocket Lint That Changed the World" (*St. Vitus Books; 365 pp.*)

The plague that ravaged northern Europe in the latter quarter of the fourteenth century was ultimately tracked to virulent spores breeding in the pocket lint of sailors from pestilential climes landing at the North Sea port of Hamburg. Every pocket in the Hanseatic League was thereupon ordered sewn closed by the controversial Edict of Bremen. It was the enterprising Lübeck leathercrafter Franz-Heinrich Wallet—or his wife; experts disagree—who soon devised the eponymously named replacement. The resulting portable, foldable, sturdy, and capacious wallet also proved safer than its easily slashed cloth predecessor; this encouraged burghers to carry more money with them, which in turn led to the phenomenon of impulse spending and encouraged the development of the first crude, hand-cranked calculator to keep up with quick cash transactions—leading in a straight technological line to what we know today as the computer. Let's just say that the rest is history. ♦

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I nervously walked into the dimly lit bar.

Our eyes met immediately. Suddenly my head was spinning and my legs were suddenly filled with cement. He smiled and raised an eyebrow suggestively as I *moved slowly toward the bar. Moments later I was so* close I could feel his warm breath on my face.

"I didn't think you'd come," Bale said.

"You said it was important," I replied as I glanced and admired the quiet sophistication of the small cocktail lounge.

There was a polished oak bar, and lemon-colored light hovered over dozens of different liquor bottles against a mirrored wall. I glanced briefly into his steady brown eyes and then back at the bottles. I knew that if I gazed into his eyes long enough the wonderful, all-enveloping lust, I mean — love would return.

I focused on a thick frosted bottle with a thin neck and bold royal-blue lettering. I gazed at the small black script lettering below and pretended I was reading an important declaration instead of looking at Bale out of the corner of my eye and recalling the miserable evening three years before when he had confessed that my suspicions were correct and he was moving back in with his college fiancée, Nola. The same woman whom he'd promised me he was finished with the first time we made love.

I knew if I looked into his smooth cinnamon brown face I would be in trouble. But for how long? An evening? Week? Month? Maybe even another year.

"Can I get you a drink?" Bale asked as he took a sip from his cocktail glass brimming with a lime and several ice cubes.

"Sure," I *said as I caught the eye of the handsome* bartender and mouthed, "Dry martini with Absolut please."

"So have you been thinking about me?" Bale asked.

I didn't answer as I watched the bartender pluck the bottle I'd focused on a minute ago. He dramatically poured the clear liquid into a sexy martini glass. After an uncomfortable silence Bale repeated his question.

"What do you mean have I been thinking about you?" I demanded.

"Yo, hold up. I see some things haven't changed. You still have that same edge about you."

"What do you want, Bale? What's so important that you had to see me tonight?" The bartender placed my drink in front of me and I picked it up quickly and took a sip to calm my nerves before I began to tell Bale how many sleepless nights I'd had thinking of nothing but him.

Several moments passed and Bale said, "What would you say if I told you I woke up a couple of mornings ago and realized that I was still in love with you?" He lazily took a drag from a cigarette.

"Is this the truth or is this like the love you offered before?" I asked.

"Don't you remember what I told you before I left?"

"I blocked it out," I lied.

"Baby, truth, like love, is never absolute."

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